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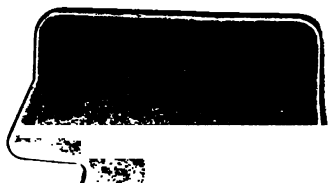
THE EVERY-DAY
COMPANION.

ADVENT TO WHITSUNTIDE

RIDLEY.



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THE
EVERY-DAY COMPANION.

PART I.
FROM ADVENT TO WHITSUNTIDE.

BY THE
REV. W. H. RIDLEY, M.A.,

RECTOR OF HAMBLEDEN, DUCKS.;
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"SERMONS IN PLAIN LANGUAGE," "A PLAIN TRACT RESPECTING
GODFATHERS AND GODMOTHERS," &c.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE object of this little work is to assist persons who have little leisure in meditating profitably every day on some subject which the Church suggests for that day. With very few exceptions, such as the Beatitudes, which are put all together in the month of May, the text is either taken from the service of the day or suggested by the season of the year, as in Lent and Easter-week, or by something which occurs in the service. The poetry is culled from a great many sources. Permission has kindly been conceded by the author of the "Christian Year" and Dr. Monsell to make use of portions of their beautiful works.

Lent has been made to begin on the 22nd of February, in consequence of which Easter Day falls on the 8th of April, and the other Festivals are regulated by this. When Lent falls earlier than this, the pieces for spare days in February can be read on the unsupplied days in March or April; and when it falls later, pieces from the superfluous days of April can be taken for use before Lent begins, care being always taken that at Ascensiontide and Whitsuntide the appointed passages be used. An extra week has been added in case any persons may find it more convenient to use these indifferent passages than to mingle April or May with February and March.

The Every-day Companion.

November 30.

ST. ANDREW'S DAY.

JOHN i. 36, 37. *Looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

At the beginning, and until the end, Jesus is set before you as your Saviour and your Example. Pray that God will give you grace to follow Him, like St. Andrew. Take Him as your own Saviour, and seek to do as He did. So shall He go and be with you all through the year, whatever may befall you. Think of Him when you are at work, at play, at meals, in bed, and try to do what you think He would do.

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild restless sea;
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,
Saying, "Christian, follow Me."

December 1.

REV. xxii. 12. *Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

You cannot tell how soon the end shall be. "Quickly" Christ will come, even though it may be a few years yet before He appears. You will feel then at once that all is over—no more preparation, no more repentance. What is done, cannot then be undone; and it will be too late to do what has not been done. Do everything as if it were the last thing you would do.

Great God! to Thee our prayers we pour,
In deep abasement bending;
Oh, shield us in that last dread hour,
Thy wondrous love extending.
May we, in this our trial-day,
With wakeful hearts Thy word obey,
And thus prepare to meet Him.

December 2.

ECCLES. xii. 14. *For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

God's piercing eye takes notice of everything now, good and bad, and He keeps account of it—all the ill you do or suffer, all the good things you try to do and to say. Every little thing, which no one else knows of, the secret reason or motive for which you do things, He knows, and will pass His judgment on it that day. Do not make light of little things; do not think to hide away anything; do not think that any little prayer or kind act will be passed over because it is in secret.

Thou, Who on the judgment day
Our most secret thoughts shalt weigh,
Shield us now with pitying care,
Guard us from temptation's snare.

December 3.

ROM. xiii. 12. *The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*

This world is all dark compared with heaven. Heaven will soon be here. Sin, and all belonging to it, will fly from His face then, as things of night pass away in daylight. Break off evil habits *now*, to-day—everything you will be ashamed of when you speak to Him. Look to Him for strength to conquer them all. The end shall be day without any night to follow: "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The night hath waned; the day is near,
The day when Jesus shall appear:
Oh, be our lamps with oil well stored,
That we may meet our coming Lord.

December 4.

MALACHI iii. 1, 2. *The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming?*

Christ came suddenly and unexpectedly upon the Scribes and Pharisees, and they rejected Him, and He has now rejected them. If He takes me all by surprise in coming again, how shall I be able to endure it? But now I will know Him and love Him in this life; I will pray to Him and believe in Him and make Him my Friend, and then He will be my Friend when He comes to judge me.

Hark, the glad sound! the Saviour comes,
The Saviour promised long!
Let every heart prepare a throne,
And every voice a song.

December 5.

2 THESS. iii. 5. *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

It sometimes seems wearisome waiting for Christ to set things right, when God's enemies seem to flourish, when wicked men grow worse and worse, and when we ourselves are ill-used. We have to learn patience, patient waiting as well as patient suffering. He will come at the right time, and will not tarry one moment too long. God must incline our hearts to love Him, and to wait on and on without being wearied.

How long, O Lord our Saviour,
Wilt Thou remain away?
Our hearts are growing weary
Of Thy so long delay.
Oh, when shall come the moment,
When, brighter far than morn,
The sunshine of Thy glory
Shall on Thy people dawn?

December 6.

REV. i. 7. *Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.*

Though you did not see Him when He was on earth, you will see Him when He comes to judge, and you will then remember in a moment all your sins which pierced Him, that is, which caused Him to suffer and die. If you have known Him here by faith as having died for your sins, you will rejoice to see Him come again to take you unto Himself.

Our glad Hosannas, Prince of Peace,
Thy welcome shall proclaim;
And heaven's eternal arches ring
With Thy beloved Name.

December 7.

PSALM lxxvii. 4. *O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.*

What an unspeakable comfort it is that the Great Judgment shall be righteous, now that through Jesus Christ "righteousness and peace have kissed each other!" We shall not be judged by the mistaken and harsh suspicions of our fellow-men, who often have an object in condemning us unjustly, but by Him who is Perfect Truth, and at the same time is Perfect Love. He can make allowances for our weaknesses, our struggles, our disappointed hopes, and "delighteth in mercy."

So, when Thou shalt come again,
Judge of angels and of men,
We with all Thy saints shall sing
Hallelujahs to our King.

December 8.

MATT. xxv. 6. *At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.*

Perhaps he may come this very day! Am I ready to receive Him? Let me think of this at all times, whatever I am doing. Perhaps He may come while I am doing it, and take me in the act, or word, or thought, and I shall not be able to cut it short, or to hide it. His coming will take many persons by surprise: why not me among the number? Oh, happy, happy those who are doing what He wishes when He appears!

Oh, wake Thy slumbering virgins,
Send forth the solemn cry,—
Let all the saints repeat it,—
“The Bridegroom draweth nigh!”
May all our lamps be burning,
Our loins well girded be,
Each longing heart preparing
With joy Thy Face to see.

December 9.

HEB. iv. 12. *The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Though this verse doubtless refers chiefly to Christ, it speaks also of the written Word. If I read it day by day to order my life according to it, God will shew me by it what is in my heart. If I judge myself, my secret feelings and motives, by what I read there, the Holy Spirit will guide me to true repentance and change of life. O Lord, “open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of Thy” Word.

Divine Instructor, glorious Lord,
Be Thou for ever near;
Teach us to love Thy sacred Word,
And find the Saviour there.

December 10.

ISAIAH v. 20. *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter !*

We cannot make wrong things right by calling them by good names ; nor can good things be made bad by giving them bad names. To do this is only to deceive ourselves. At the last day all things will appear as they really are, and if we have miscalled them, and have persuaded ourselves wrong about them, it will be too late to set ourselves right. If you do wrong, and choose to say it is right, you will then be found guilty of the wrong ; if you condemn another who has done right, you will also be found guilty of condemning him wrongly. Own what is right, love it, do it, and God will accept it. Hate what is evil, avoid it as evil, and God will protect you.

Holy Spirit, from our mind
Drive the thought and wish unkind ;
Deed and word impure remove,
And our bosom fill with love.

December 11.

JOHN xiv. 3. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

O sweet and blessed Saviour ! that Thou shouldest care enough about me to think of me as Thou sittest in glory, much more to come and take me where Thou art ! I am not worthy of such care and love, and never can be. But I will believe Thy word and promise. Oh, make me day by day more like Thee in my heart and conduct, and make me long more and more for Thy heavenly home ! But it is not for my sake, but only for Thine own that Thou wilt take me there.

Glad within those mansions blest
Dwell the raptured saints above ;
From all toil and care at rest,
Happy in Emmanuel's love.

December 12.

REV. xx. 12. *I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

If I could see my own name in those books now, what should I find written there about me? Everything, what I have forgotten, as well as what I remember, that I have done all through my life. What will to-day add to it? I should be afraid, and in despair, of the opening of the books on that day, if it were not that Christ has died for me, and for His love's sake has written my name in His book of life. Oh, gracious Saviour, let not my name be ever blotted out of Thy book!

Lo! the book, exactly worded,
Wherein all hath been recorded,
Thence shall judgment be awarded.
King of Majesty tremendous,
Who dost free salvation send us,
Fount of pity, then befriend us.

December 13.

ISAIAH xxxiii. 17. *Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.*

This is the great comfort amongst all the trials and hardships of this life. This life is full of pain, and distress, and disappointment, and heaven seems at a great distance. Often likewise my faith is clouded, and I cannot see the promises made to me through Jesus Christ. But in this great assurance is my hope, after all. Come whatever God sees fit to send: He may even hide His face from me, if so He is pleased to do. The time is coming when He will let me see Him in His beauty, in that blessed land.

Jerusalem, my happy home!
When shall I gaze on thee?
When shall our labours have an end?
Thy joys when shall we see?

December 14.

ECCLES. xi. 9. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

God intends us to enter heartily into all the things which we undertake, and to be happy in them. But we are so easily carried away by them, so as to forget God and His will. If we would take the Preacher's advice at all times, the enjoyments would not lose their value, but we should be restrained from falling into sin. In pleasure, in work, in money-making, in conversation, remember that for each particular thing, the thing you are about at that particular moment, you must give account to God. Do it so that you may not be ashamed.

Whate'er pursuits my time employ,
One thought shall fill my heart with joy;
That silent secret thought shall be,
That all my hopes are fixed on Thee,—
On Thee, my God, on Thee.

December 15.

MALACHI iii. 17. *And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.*

At the end God will look over and put together in safety all those who have loved Him, and whom He has sanctified for Himself, and He will make them up into a crown for His own glory. He may seem to neglect them in this world; they may be despised and afflicted, and be heavy in spirit: but He never takes His eyes off them; they are His jewels. He is purifying them, and brightening them, and getting them ready for His own use in eternity. I am one of them. Oh, my gracious Father, do with me what Thou wilt, only make me pure and glorious!

Thine for ever! God of love,
Hear us from Thy throne above;
Thine for ever may we be,
Here and in eternity.

December 16.

HEB. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.*

God is pleased to convey His great gifts to our souls by the hands and lips of men like ourselves. We ought to honour them for their work's sake, because that work is God's work, and leading us to salvation. If they teach, or warn, or advise us, they have to give account of it. God will require to know what they have done for my soul. I ought to try to profit by what they do for me, and I must pray for my ministers that they may be faithful in their ministry, and may at last "receive the crown of glory which fadeth not away."

So when their work is finished here,
May they in hope their charge resign;
Before Thy throne with joy appear,
And there with crowns of glory shine.

December 17.

2 PET. iii. 11. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.*

The whole world that now is will pass away. There will be nothing left of those things which now so dazzle poor sinners' eyes; no more money, no more pleasure, no more honour! When all this is gone, what will be left? If I have nothing better now than these things, what shall I have when these things are all gone? Now I ought to seek after holiness, to strive after the mind of Christ, that He may own me for His in that day; and then I shall not care what has become of the pomps and vanity of this wicked world; Christ will be mine, and I shall be His. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word shall not pass away.

Jesu, in Thee our hopes we stay,
To lead on to Thine abode,
Assured Thy love will far outpay
Our toils and trials on the road.

December 18.

1 COR. iii. 13. *Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*

All that I do will have to pass through this fierce fire: all my religion, all my work which I have done in the world, all my acts of charity or kindness, all my reading and conversation. It is not enough that it is built on the sound foundation, that is, that I believe in Jesus Christ and mean to do right, but I must take care that each thing be right in itself, and the very best I can do. Oh, if I should see all burned up in that day, and hardly be saved!

Search, try, O God, my thoughts and heart,
If mischief lurks in any part;
Correct me where I go astray,
And guide me in Thy perfect way.

December 19.

1 THESS. iv. 16. *The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.*

What an awful sound that will be to hear: and then to think I shall be sure to hear it! Oh, if I am taken by surprise! But it is the greatest comfort, that He who comes with that sound is the Lord, my Saviour, He who so loved me that He died for me, He whom I have trusted with my soul, for whose sake I am forgiven: it is He coming to take me for His own.

The dead in Christ shall first arise
At the last trumpet's sounding,
To meet their Saviour in the skies,
With joy His throne surrounding.
No gloomy fears their souls dismay;
His presence sheds eternal day
On those prepared to meet Him.

December 20.

MATT. xxv. 34. *Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

How blessed a thing it is to know that that kingdom has been prepared for me! Who am I, that God should think of me? and above all, prepare such an inheritance for me! But how unspeakably welcome will the sound be of my Saviour's voice calling me to enter upon it! After all the tossings to and fro of body and soul in this life, to "come" to Him and be at rest!

And when Thou, Lord, once more glorious shalt come,
Oh, for a dwelling-place in Thy bright home,
Through all eternity.
Nearer, my God, to Thee; nearer to Thee.

December 21.

JOHN xx. 29. *Thomas, because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

Faith which depends on seeing is not worthy the name of faith. But how slow I am to believe! I hardly believe the value of my soul, or the punishment which I deserve, or the evil of sin, or the gift of God in Jesus Christ! But I do believe and I will believe that God loves me, and has given His dear Son to take away my sins. I do believe and I will believe that He means to give me a portion with the saints in glory, not for my sake but for Jesus Christ's sake. Oh, that I could really believe! "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Could we but make our doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love
With unclouded eyes;

Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er;
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood
Should fright us from the shore.

December 22.

2 PET. iii. 9. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

The great Day has not come. It has been promised for so long a time. Why is this delay? God is giving me time to repent more fully, to break off my sins more perfectly. If He wished to punish me and meant to cut me off and cast me away, He would not have lengthened out my time in this way. It is His tender love, and motherly longing after my poor careless soul, which makes Him seem to break His promise of coming quickly. O Lord, give me true repentance, that I perish not.

Come, Lord, and tarry not;
Bring the long-looked-for day.
Oh! why these years of waiting here,
These ages of delay?

December 23.

MALACHI iv. 2. *Unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings.*

Christ has come the first time after the darkness of early times like the sun after the night. He has come to my dark heart, and I now can see, if I will, the way to heaven, the good things of God now and hereafter, and God's heavenly graces will nourish and cleanse my heart. Jesus will always be present in my soul, to heal all its diseases of temper, and bad feeling, and wrong speech, and indifference. O blessed Jesus, make me perfectly to know Thee as the Light and the Life.

Visit then this soul of mine,
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief,
Fill me, O Thou Light Divine;
Scatter all my unbelief:
More and more Thyself display,
Shining to the perfect day.

December 24.

REV. xxii. 20. *Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.*

To-morrow will be the great festival of Christ's birth. Am I ready to welcome Him in the manger? Do I feel how utterly I am undone but for Him, and how great a thing it is for Him to come down and become a man to save me? Am I ready to welcome Him a second time? And yet I do not know how "quickly" this second coming may arrive. Am I looking for Him, waiting for Him, hoping for Him? Do I feel that I shall be glad to see Him because He will bring me to Himself for ever? Am I sure that He will know me and be glad to see me, and to catch me up with Him? Lord Jesus, I do love Thee, I do long for Thee to come again, I do believe that Thou lovest me. Come to me, and make me love Thee and long for Thee more and more.

Come, Lord Jesus, and dispel
This dark cloud in which I dwell;
Thus to me the power impart
To behold Thee as Thou art.

Christmas Day.

JOHN i. 14. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*

That Word is God, and for my sake He became a man like myself, with all my weaknesses and pains, and dwelt here among sinners, to hear and see all the sin of this world. He submitted to all this that He might do His Father's will, and might take me to be in heaven. O blessed Jesu, I do wish to love Thee for Thy great love to me, and to love Thy Father's will as Thou didst love it, and to be saved by Thy precious blood. Make me to live holy as Thou art holy.

Hasten, mortals, to adore Him;
Learn His Name and taste His joy;
Till in heaven ye sing before Him,
"Glory be to God on high."
Let us learn the wondrous story
Of our great Redeemer's birth:
Spread the brightness of His glory,
Till it cover all the earth.

St. Stephen's Day.

ACTS vii. 59. *And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

What a noble and blessed end! We cannot help envying the saint. But should I be able to do as he did? Have I such faith, such simple confident faith, in my Saviour above, that I can at once lay down my life in His hands? Yet why should I doubt any more than the first martyr? He gave Himself for me as well as for St. Stephen. Lord Jesus, give me faith to suffer with Thee!

Lord, may that grace be ours,
Like them in faith to bear
All that of sorrow, grief, or pain
May be our portion here;

Enough if Thou at last
The word of blessing give,
And let us rest beneath Thy feet,
Where saints and angels live.

St. John's Day.

JOHN xiii. 23. *Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.*

What a blessed position for the disciple! It was because Jesus loved him that He drew him there, as a mother lays her little one on her breast. But Jesus will love me likewise, if only I will learn to love Him, and He will draw me as close to Him, and will pour His grace into my heart. Am I meditating on Him, and striving to talk with Him and to learn of Him, and to become like Him, full of heavenly love?

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
Come quickly from above;
Write Thy new Name upon my heart,
Thy new, best name of Love.

Innocents' Day.

REV. xiv. 4. *These are they which follow the Lamb
whithersoever He goeth.*

What a gift it is to be allowed to follow Jesus; and this is what He invited persons to do when He called them: "Follow Me." I must follow Him in little things and greater, in words, tempers, actions, tone of voice, bearing annoyances, doing kindnesses, employing my time well, thinking of God's will in all things; then He will draw me after Him in death to Paradise, and at the last day to sit with Him on His throne. Oh, may I follow Him thither!

Lord, help us every hour
Thy cleansing grace to claim;
In life to glorify Thy power,
In death to praise Thy Name.

December 29.

ACTS xxvi. 28. *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

The year is fast drawing to a close. How many times during the past year and during my former life have I felt half disposed to turn more seriously to God, and to seek to love Him more perfectly, and how often have I allowed these better feelings to die away without making any real improvement! Am I persuaded now in myself, if God will give me grace, (which most surely He will not deny me,) to begin afresh at once and seek to save my soul? Am I determined not to waver or be in doubt any longer?

Only, O Lord, in Thy dear love,
Fit us for perfect rest above;
And help us this and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray.

December 30.

ISA. lxiv. 4. *Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.*

Oh, the unspeakable and unimaginable blessings and glories of heaven! God has provided and prepared them all, not for angels and archangels, but for poor sinners, men like I am, sinful and unclean, but whom He will forgive and cleanse from sin, and for me, even me myself. I hardly dare to think of it at all; and when I try I am hardly able to think of it. O Lord, for Thy love's sake give me grace to wait for Thee, and let me not fall short of these good things, through Jesus Christ.

I know not, O I know not, what joys await us there;
What radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare.
Jesus, in mercy bring us to that dear land of rest,
Who art with God the Father and Spirit ever blest.

December 31.

1 CHRON. xxi. 12. *Advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me.*

The dying year seems to speak thus to me, like a prophet or messenger from God. What will it tell Him of me when it comes to an end to-night, of my words, and actions, and thoughts, and feelings? Am I any better in heart and life than I was a twelvemonth ago? Am I right? Am I really in a state of salvation, my heart given to Him, my body and faculties dedicated to Him, my hopes resting simply on my Saviour's blood, and the world forsaken? Lord, save me: I perish.

Jesu, on Thee our hopes we stay,
To lead us on to Thine abode,
Assured Thy love will far outpay
The toils and trials on the road. Amen.

January 1.

THE CIRCUMCISION.

PSALM xxiii. 1. *The Lord is my Shepherd : therefore
can I lack nothing.*

What an unspeakable blessing, to be able to begin another year with this assurance, that Jesus is my Shepherd ; He who knows all my wants, and all my weaknesses, all the dangers and trials which I shall have to pass through, and who has compassion upon my every infirmity—He who did not shrink from weakness and suffering for my sake, and as to-day shed His first drops of blood for me. Lord Jesus, guide me day by day by Thy Spirit, and after that receive me with glory !

In our weakness and distress,
Rock of strength, be Thou our stay ;
In the pathless wilderness
Be our true and living way.

January 2.

ROM. ii. 29. *But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

How much easier it is to be an outward Christian than an inward ! Hitherto I have had much too little of that which is within, and which alone is real. It is easy to look and to talk like a religious person, but to *be* one is quite another thing. For this I must really renounce pleasures, and gains, and honours, which I have enjoyed, and have all within me formed anew according to the mind of Jesus Christ. Oh that God will turn, and cleanse, and sanctify my heart, that I may be altogether His !

A heart in every thought renewed,
And filled with love divine ;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good ;
A heart, O Lord, like Thine !

January 3.

GEN. iii. 9. *And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?*

So I hear Him call to me through my conscience. Where am I? Am I in the place in which He expects me to be, and doing what He has appointed for me? Am I getting nearer to Him in my heart, and striving to get nearer to Him every day? Am I never in a place where I should be ashamed for Him to find me? or speaking words that I should not like Him to hear? or letting thoughts rest in my mind that for very shame I could not tell out to Him? He knows where I am every moment. I will try to remember this, and to be occupied always as He wishes me to be.

All mine is Thine,—say but the word,
Whate'er Thou wilt shall be done;
I know Thy love, all-gracious Lord;
I know it seeks my good alone.

January 4.

GEN. v. 24. *Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*

St. Paul tells us that Enoch's holy life was the fruit of his faith. What a blessed character! "He walked with God." What a wonderful reward! "God took him." I too would walk with God; that is, I would go according to God's rule in everything, as if I had Him by my side, and could hear His suggestions, and warnings, and encouragements. I do wish to be "led by the Spirit;" and though I do not expect to be taken, like Enoch, into heaven without dying, I am sure that God will be pleased with me, will carry me all my journey through on earth, and will take me to Himself for eternity.

Eternity! Eternity!
How long art thou, Eternity!
Who thinks on thee speaks thus with God:
"Here prove me with Thy chast'ning rod,
Oh! let me here Thy judgments bear,
Hereafter, Lord, in mercy spare!"—
Mark well, O man, Eternity!

January 5.

MATT. iv. 10. *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan.*

What do I do when I am tempted, to secret sins or open? Do I look at the wrong thing till I feel as if I could not tear myself from it, as if it is almost necessary for my life? Do I try to persuade myself that I may do it, and so go as near to it as I can? Or do I start back in horror from it, as though it were the most hateful and terrible thing in the world? Do I bid the tempter get away and leave me alone, or do I talk to him as long as I can, and almost wish he would tempt me more violently still, that I might seem to have more excuse. Lord, give me always strength the first moment to "resist the devil," and do Thou make him "flee from" me.

Fierce and furious is the fight,
Red with blood the battle-plain,
Darkly close the shades of night,
Cries for human help are vain;
Cheering then Thy summons—"Come,
Christian soldiers, welcome home."

January 6.

THE EPIPHANY.

LUKE ii. 32. *A light to lighten the Gentiles.*

As on this day, when the three wise men from the East saw the infant Saviour and worshipped Him, these words were first fulfilled. If He had not come specially for us, who were not God's ancient people, we should always have remained in darkness. What a blessing is it that we are not like our forefathers, falling down to stocks and stones, and not knowing God our Father! Do I seriously reflect on God's mercy in making me what I am, and giving me my spiritual blessings? Does the thought of this make me anxious to send these same blessings to other Gentiles?

Oh, bid Thy glorious Gospel run,
And tell the nations of Thy Son!
Of Him who on the accursed tree
Died, that their souls might live to Thee.

January 7.

PSALM lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.*

When I think of the foolish as well as wicked things that I have wished for and taken pleasure in, in days gone by, and that I have been very glad when sacred things were over and I could go back to those foolish things, I am amazed and ashamed. God, O my God, Thou alone art worthy to be loved, and to be my possession and delight. But I cannot delight in Thee except Thou enable me. Oh, draw me to Thyself in any way which seemeth best unto Thee.

Oh, for a nearer walk with God!
Lord, turn my wandering heart to Thee;
Help me to live by faith in Him
Who lived, and died, and rose for me.

January 8.

PSALM xl. 12. *I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart: my talk hath been of Thy truth, and of Thy salvation.*

How seldom do Christians speak one with another about God and His salvation. And yet nothing is plainer than that God intends they should encourage and help each other by their words, as well as by their example. A religion that is only in talk is a deceit, but if the heart is really touched the mouth will speak. I will try to have none but God-fearing companions, and I will try to provoke them to holy things by godly conversation. Lord, guide Thou my lips!

Do Thou unlock my lips,
With sorrow closed, and shame;
So shall my mouth Thy wondrous praise
To all the world proclaim.

January 9.

MATT. vii. 24. *Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock.*

How can I be surprised that I have so often given way to sudden temptation, and so often been cast down by unexpected affliction, since it is too true that I have not been resting on the Rock, and have not given my mind to do according to His sayings. This little verse which I read every day is better than none, and with God's help I will try to attend to it and to practise what it teaches me. Lord, in the trials of life do Thou uphold me.

Lord, in mercy guide me,
Be Thou e'er beside me;
In Thy ways direct me;
'Neath Thy wings protect me.

January 10.

JOHN i. 39. *He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day.*

So does Jesus lead on all those who in any way seek Him. Do I really feel that Jesus dwells in His Church, among His people, and that I can find Him very nigh to me in Holy Communion? Lord, thither I will come in simple faith, trusting Thy word, and with a humble penitence. Shew Thyself to my poor sinful soul, forgive all my sin, cleanse away all love of sin by Thine own presence, and abide with me, and let me abide with Thee.

Oh, draw my Saviour, after Thee,
So shall I run and never tire;
With gracious words still comfort me;
Be Thou my hope, my sole desire.

January 11.

ROM. viii. 28. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*

I am often ready to complain that things seem "against me," as Jacob complained. I have so little faith and trust in my heavenly Father. But I do really wish to believe that He does all things well, and I do not really doubt His love and goodness to me. But when sickness, or pain, or disappointment, or unkindness comes, or when I feel very cold and careless and indifferent, I am ready to be cast down. O gracious Lord, make me to feel that even these sad things Thou dost use to do me good, everlasting good!

Give me, O Lord, whatever lot Thy love
And wisdom deem most fitting for me here,
So be it gilded with Thy grace, and prove
Me to Thee dearer, Thee to me more dear.

January 12.

HEB. xi. 17. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac.*

His only son, the son whom he loved, the son given him by promise, the son to whose seed the promises were made; he offered him up without a word, or even the appearance of regret. And yet I hesitate to give up some trifling pleasure or whim for God's sake, or to deny myself some little gain or amusement for my neighbour's good. How shall I ever be the "Friend of God," or deserve to be classed with those who believe in Him? "Lord! I believe: help Thou mine unbelief."

Ask only for a holy heart,
And a submissive will
To bear My cross, to do My part,
To trust Me, and be still.

January 13.

Ps. lxxviii. 13. *Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold.*

God does not bring His servants low without encouraging them to hope that He will raise them again. His love makes Him chasten them with the rod that they may be better able to value and enjoy the abundant blessings which He has in store for them. Every stroke of His chastening arm is a warrant that out of their affliction they shall come purified and sanctified. Welcome then affliction, welcome sorrow, if they lead me to know and love my God more, and lead me on to joy and glory.

Sweet is the bitterest smart
That, with the bended knee,
Bows down this broken heart;
For who, my Saviour, who could be
A sufferer long, that flies to Thee?

January 14.

MATT. xii. 50. *Whosoever shall do the will of My Father, which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.*

So great is the love of Jesus to His Father, that for His Father's sake He loves all who love His Father. Those to whom God gives grace to love Him He loves again. "Because He hath set His love upon Me, therefore will I deliver Him." And yet "we love Him because He first loved us." All is of His love, and all comes back to His love again. He will embrace me if I love Him and keep His commandments with that love with which He teaches me to love those who are nearest to me on earth. And yet I think it all too much trouble to give up even hurtful things to please Him, and because He desires it.

Great God, how grateful we should be
For all that Thou hast done,
To make poor sinners one with Thee
Through the Eternal Son.

January 15.

ROM. xiii. 14. *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The heart must have something to take delight in. We must renounce evil, and everything which tends that way. What shall we have in its stead? Jesus came that we might have Him wholly, and nothing but Him; that we might trust in Him for our pardon and salvation, that we might look to Him as our guide, imitate Him as our pattern, take up with Him in all things, delight ourselves in Him, and so hope in Him both in life and in death. Am I so really with my heart putting Him on? really, and not only in word, leaning upon Him in my soul, and resting on Him?

All my trust on Thee is stayed;
All my help from Thee I bring:
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.

January 16.

MATT. ii. 10. *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*

Their joy was so great because they were so eager to find Christ, and they felt convinced the star would guide them to Him. Instead of a star in the heaven, I have my Bible, my Church, my ministers, my Sundays, Holy Communion, all given on purpose to lead me to Jesus Christ. Do I really rejoice in these? Am I very fond of them, glad when they come round, when I can use them? Am I using them at every opportunity? Am I sorry when the time for them passes away? Am I longing for them till the time comes round again?

In Thee, my God, will I rejoice,
To Thee I'll sing with heart and voice,
Thy praise at morn, and noon, and night,
Shall be my duty and delight.

January 17.

GEN. xxxii. 26. *And he said, I will not let Thee go,
except Thou bless me.*

All night long Jacob wrestled with this man, and more than man. Did I ever pray with such earnestness and perseverance? Do I continually pray in that manner? We often hear of persons watching without sleep through the night for pleasure, or for gain, or to attend upon a sick person. How often do I shorten my sleep that I may "continue in prayer?" And yet how unbounded might be my blessings if I did pray more fervently. Indeed, can I pretend to be a Christian in heart, a man of God, a disciple of Jesus, if my prayers are cold, and short, and my thoughts wandering at them?

Lord, turn not Thou Thine ear away;
Thou all my wants dost know:
By day and night I'll ever cry,
Lord, bless me ere Thou go.

January 18.

ROM. xii. 15. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep
with them that weep.*

It is not less for my own good, than for my neighbour's, that the Apostle gives me this command. Nothing is more hurtful to the soul than selfishness. Sometimes the happiness of a fellow-Christian grates upon my feelings when I am low-spirited; and sometimes his sorrows weary me when I feel happy. But I am always glad to have my dear Saviour at hand to sympathise with my feelings, whether sorrowful or joyful; and I will try to become like Him by sharing my neighbour's feelings; and so I shall comfort and sober both him and myself. May the Lord deliver me in the day of trouble!

My brother's joy, my brother's care,
I'll make it all my own;
Whoe'er his brother's lot will share,
His God will not disown.

January 19.

1 COR. i. 27. *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.*

How mad then of men to be proud of themselves and their attainments, to boast themselves of their wisdom, and presume upon their strength! When Nebuchadnezzar became like an ox of the field, and Samson was made a prisoner, where were their wisdom and their might? But how hard it is for me to take a low place in my own esteem! How I have been pleased to hear others flatter me, and say how clever, or how strong, or how active, or how diligent, I am. What does God account of me? That is all that is worth enquiring. My neighbour's opinion, if it is not backed up by God's judgment, will avail me nothing.

Oh, for a humbler walk with God!
 Lord, bend this stubborn heart of mine;
 Subdue each rising rebel thought,
 And all my will conform to Thine.

January 20.

MATT. xviii. 11. *The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.*

I cannot help feeling that by myself I am utterly lost. I am so continually turning back to evil things, even in spite of my better knowledge and my good resolutions. I have no strength to overcome temptation, and I cannot blot my own sins out of God's great book. So I must be lost. But Christ came on purpose to save such persons as I am, and therefore He will save me. If I had not been so lost, perhaps He would not have come. But He has come for me to save me from this terrible ruin, and I will hope and believe in Him.

Lord, who once from heaven descending,
 Lost mankind didst seek and save,
 Us in our distress befriending,
 Grant the succour which we crave:
 From a sinful world we flee,
 Shepherd of our souls, to Thee.

January 21.

GEN. xli. 51. *God hath made me forget all my toil, and
all my father's house.*

Not that Joseph had ceased to love his father or his brethren, but the goodness with which God had blessed him in his banishment made up, and more than made up, for all that he had lost. So does God for those who will forsake the world, and worldly gain, and honour, for Him, and like St. Paul, suffer gladly for His sake. He will converse in secret with their soul; He will teach them new things about Himself; He will comfort them, and pour on them His wondrous peace in sorrow; He will give them the hope of, and belief in, such sweetness and glory hereafter, that they really forget even pain and earthly friendship. O my God, draw me close unto Thyself!

Farewell, vain world! the joy which once I felt
In thee and thine is now all passed and gone:
Since God Himself within my heart hath dwelt
I care for nought beside; I joy in Him alone.

January 22.

PSALM cvii. 43. *Whoso is wise will ponder these things: and
they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.*

Do I feel disposed to complain that I do not understand God's truth, or the many blessed and holy things which holy men say of Him? And do I sometimes hear careless and wicked men speak evil of good things, and say they do not believe, because they do not understand? Have I ever enquired into the reason of all this? Is it not because neither I myself, nor they, ponder, meditate upon, muse over the words and works of God? My thoughts and feelings would be very different if I were really day after day to think of and reflect upon such a short passage of Scripture as is here set down for every day.

Oh, may Thy heavenly pages be
Our first, our chief delight;
And still new beauties may we see,
And still-increasing light.

January 23.

ROM. xii. 21. *Overcome evil with good.*

I cannot expect to pass through life without meeting with enemies. Satan urges me to try to crush them by opposition and enmity. Jesus entreats me to melt them with kindness, as He Himself did. In attempting to follow Satan I should fail of my end, and should hurt my own soul. In following Jesus I shall at least do good to myself, even if I fail to win over my adversary. Oh, for grace to quell the rising spirit of vengeance within, and for the true spirit of meekness which was in Jesus. I grieve to think how many opportunities I have lost of overcoming those who hurt me, by kindness and forbearance: and yet God continues His kindness to myself. I will try to love my enemies as Christ loves me.

Kept peaceful in the midst of strife,
Forgiving and forgiven,
Oh, may we lead the pilgrim's life,
And follow Thee to heaven.

January 24.

1 COR. vi. 20. *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; wherefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

I have no right to seek my own advantage, or follow my own pleasure, because I belong to God, who has purchased me at so high a price. My limbs, my mind, my reason, all my faculties are not mine, they belong to God. I am only the steward to take care of them, and employ them for Him. The plain duty and task is set before me, to think of Him first, and what He wishes me to do with all He has given me, how He wishes my hands to work, my feet to walk, my mind to think, and my heart to love.

Not ours, not ours the choice,
In great things or in small;
Be Thou our guide, our strength,
Our wisdom, and our all.

January 25.

ACTS ix. 6. *And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

What a change! not only sudden, but complete. His feelings, desires, thoughts, all turned. Nothing but sovereign grace could effect this, and to this St. Paul is never slow to ascribe it. "By the grace of God" is his motto. And that grace must work the same change in me, though perhaps not suddenly. I have had that grace, and I humbly trust it has not been wholly withdrawn from me; but how much more is there for it to work within me, to make me care for nothing but what God cares for!

Hark! through the courts of heaven
Voices of angels sound:
"He that was dead now lives again!
He that was lost is found!"

January 26.

JOHN i. 34. *As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

This extends not only to my fellow-Christians, but to all mankind; for Christ loved me who was no brother of His after the flesh, but a Gentile. I am to be kind and forbearing, and forgiving to all my brethren, and seek after the souls of those who are wandering in the wilderness of ignorance. What do I do for Christian missions? to help to teach and convert the heathen and the Jews? Ought I not to give more of my worldly goods? Ought I not to take more interest in missions, as, for example, when there is a meeting, or a sermon in church? Ought I not to pray for them in my private devotions?

Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted.
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation! Oh, Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till each remotest nation
Has learned Messiah's name.

January 27.

PSALM CXXVI. 6. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*

God does not preserve His children *from* affliction, but *in* affliction. The trials or sorrows which He sends, all lead on to greater joy; as the Israelites multiplied in Egypt the more they were afflicted. I cannot beg of God to spare one trial, because I know that if I am without chastisement I cannot be a true son of God. I will try to welcome every sorrow and pain, and I will pray God to uphold me in it, and to make it yield me good by sanctifying me that I may attain everlasting joy through Jesus Christ.

But soon I found that sorrow, worn
As duty's garment, strength supplies,
And out of darkness meekly borne,
Unto the righteous light doth rise.

January 28.

EXOD. iii. 5. *Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*

It is hard sometimes to feel the nearness of God; and as we are encouraged to "come boldly to the throne of grace," it is easy to be wanting in reverence. Reflect on God's greatness and majesty, so far beyond everything of this earth; try to feel that you are actually addressing Him, and that He is close beside thee; especially when at the altar and receiving the Sacred Elements. If you cannot feel this as you would, behave reverently and devoutly as you would behave if you did feel it, and He will draw nigh unto thee. "Let the whole earth stand in awe of Him."

Fear Him, ye saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear:
Make you His service your delight,
Your wants shall be His care.

January 29.

- 1 COR. x. 13. *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

Oh, what a blessed assurance! It is so miserable to have a vile temptation rise up again and again so strong, and seem as if it would and must carry me away in spite of everything. But then my heart is so false and deceitful that it will not look after the way of escape, and will not let me go in it, because it secretly wishes to give way to the temptation. Oh, loving Lord, pity my infirmity and sinfulness, and help me!

When trials sore obstruct my way,
And ills I cannot flee,
Oh, let my strength be as my day;
O Lord, remember me.

January 30.

- MATT. xxvii. 36. *And sitting down they watched Him there.*

They gained no advantage from seeing Jesus on the Cross, because they did not look with faith. They were like the multitude thronging Him on the road, who drew no virtue from Him. And yet to look unto Jesus and to touch the hem of His garment is to obtain salvation. It must be done believing that He died for me, that I could not live without Him, and that He gives Himself to me when I believe. I will come to Holy Communion, and there think of nothing but Christ crucified; and doing that in remembrance of Him, I believe that my soul will live through Him.

Unworthy even to approach so near,
My soul lies trembling like a summer leaf;
Yet oh, forgive! I doubt not, though I fear:
"Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief."

January 31.

COL. iii. 17. *And whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.*

All, not one thing excepted; the great businesses in which I may be concerned, and the common words which I may speak to any neighbour. I am to do all for Christ's sake, as if I saw Him near me, and heard Him telling me what to do. Everything which happens is, I know, ordered well for me by God for His sake, and so I will thank Him for everything, and I will try to remember Jesus Christ at all times, in my prayers, in working, in playing, in talking, and do just what I think He would wish.

Direct, control, suggest, this day,
All I design, or do, or say;
That all my powers, with all their might,
In Thy sole glory may unite.

February 1.

MARK i. 35. *And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.*

If my Saviour felt it needful to pray, and to deprive Himself of rest that He might pray, and to go into such retirement that His attention might be undistracted, how much more needful must it be for me. My mind is so easily disturbed, my thoughts so naturally wander, I am thinking of other duties which I have to perform afterwards, if not of worse things. Oh, if God will enable me, I will clear my whole mind every morning before going out into the world, with fervent and undisturbed communion with my Father in heaven.

In the soft dewy hour of twilight grey,
Before the sun have risen on his way,
Before the birds have sung their morning hymn,
I'll to my God, and pay my vows to Him.

February 2.

MAL. iii. 1. *The Lord . . . shall suddenly come to His Temple.*

God's visitations are often sudden. His gifts of mercy and blessing, His chastisements, His warnings, they come when we think not, as the rosebud bursts just while we look aside. We are unprepared for His coming, and lose so much of the benefit of it. If I could but live always as if I felt my God close at hand, and could look out for any intimations of His Presence, if I could but wait upon Him, expecting His guidance and holding communion with Him, I should continually see Him with the eye of faith. Lord, who hath believed?

O God, unseen yet ever near,
Thy Presence may we feel;
And thus inspired with holy fear,
Before Thine altar kneel.

February 3.

EXOD. xii. 11. *And thus shall ye eat it ; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand.*

They were about to set out on an earthly journey. But this was done for our sakes, that it might teach us to remember that we may be called hence to pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death at any moment; and that therefore we must be always ready, for when He calls it will be too late to prepare. The time is short, and I know not how short. To-day my summons may come. What I have to do I must do quickly, that if He comes it may not be found undone.

Be wise then, Christian, while you may,
For swiftly time is flying;
The thoughtless man, that laughs to-day,
To-morrow may be dying.

February 4.

1 COR. xvi. 13. *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*

When I am afraid of what some one will think of me, or say of me, or do to me, is that following this direction of the Apostle? Or when I soon grow tired of some little self-denial which I have begun to practise; or when I resist temptation for a time and then give way again; or when I begin a good habit, such as coming to Daily Service, or reading the Bible every day, or coming regularly to Holy Communion, and then soon get tired of it and leave it off? I am weak as water, and full of fears. Lord, I pray Thee, strengthen me.

Onward, Christians, onward go,
Join the war, and face the foe:
Will ye flee in danger's hour?
Know ye not your Captain's power?

February 5.

JOHN vi. 58. *This is that Bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.*

O my dear Saviour, how can I bless Thee enough for the gift of Thine own self! Thou art my food, the bread of my soul. I look to Thee to nourish and supply my soul with all which it requires, and I am sure that I shall not look in vain. My faith is very weak, my love very cold, my hope very wavering. But I pray Thee leave me not; feed and strengthen me, and at last Thou wilt bring me to life eternal. Believing this, I will take in remembrance of Thee the Bread which is Thy Body.

We come, obedient to Thy word,
To feast on heavenly food;
Our meat, the Body of the Lord,
Our drink, His precious Blood.

February 6.

MARK vi. 31. *And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.*

The season of the year, the approach of Lent, makes these words very applicable. I have so many things to distract me generally, business, duties, as well as pleasures, that it is very necessary for me to put them aside for a time, that I may draw nearer to Jesus, and learn from Him more about Himself, more about my own self, and may gather strength, and deep feeling to go again into the temptations of the world. I feel the want of being alone with Him, that I may listen to Him without distraction.

Then up, my soul, and onward press
To Jesus;—in the wilderness
He waits and fights for thee:
Thy love to Him devoutly prove
By deeds, not words, and let His love
Thy "Shield and Buckler" be.

February 7.

HEB. xii. 25. *See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.*

That voice must have been terrible which made the Israelites pray that they might never hear it again, though they knew it was God's voice. To us He speaks love, pardon, peace, eternal life, through Jesus Christ. The still small voice of His love and compassion ought to melt us to obedience and humble following of Him. It will be much worse for me if I despise or neglect this love and the promises in Christ, than for the Israelites who despised the laws spoken in thunder. O blessed Jesus, constrain me, I pray Thee, to listen to Thy voice and obey it.

Who spared not His chosen seed
May send His wrath on thee:
Their day of grace is sunk in night,
Thy noon is in its prime:
Oh, turn and seek thy Saviour's face
In this accepted time.

February 8.

2 COR. iv. 16. *Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

What a blessing it is, as Plotinus said, that our soul is not bound to an immortal body. When they part, the soul will not die. This soul may be continually strengthened and improved and made more meet for heaven, by communion with Jesus Christ. The feebler our bodily frame, the more need to cling by faith to Christ Jesus. A thousand dangers beset the body, but if I am bound to Christ and living by Him nothing can by any means hurt me. Feed me, Lord Jesus, nourish me day by day with Thine own self.

Yield to me now, for I am weak,
But confident in self-despair ;
Speak to my heart, in blessing speak,
Be conquered by my instant prayer :
Speak, or Thou never hence shall move,
And tell me if Thy name be Love.

February 9.

HEB. vii. 25. *He ever liveth to make intercession for us.*

As Moses prayed for all the people when they had made the golden calf, and obtained pardon for them, so does Christ intercede for me. What should I do if He were not to ask in my behalf? How can my own prayers reach the throne of grace, except He present them? Oh, the depth of the riches of His goodness and tenderness, that in spite of my continual transgressions and falls into sin, He still does not shut up His loving-kindness and forbearance, but prays for me notwithstanding.

Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a Brother's eye,
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, His prayers, His agonies.

February 10.

EXOD. xxxiv. 35. *The children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone.*

He had been on the mount with God, and the glory of the Lord had been reflected on his face. No one can draw really nigh to God without receiving something from Him, which other persons cannot help perceiving. If my friends and neighbours, my employers, my customers, my family, my servants, do not see me to be humble, holy, pure, heavenly-minded like God Himself, I may be quite certain that I have not been having real communion with Him. Strive, my soul, to draw near to God in spirit and in truth, that virtue may come out from Him to sanctify thee.

A heart in every thought renewed,
And filled with love divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good—
A copy, Lord, of Thine.

February 11.

MARK xi. 24. *What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

Oh, where is my faith? God's promises are so good and so full, and yet I dare not trust them. He bids me believe not only that I *shall* have what I ask for, but that I do receive it. He cannot hear a simple, believing prayer, without granting the request; therefore He bids me make the request and expect the fulfilment. How many things I want from Him, and though I ask and hope to have them given, I have not faith to look certainly for their appearance. Lord, give me the gift of believing prayer!

Oh, help us through the prayer of faith
More firmly to believe;
For still the more Thy servant hath
The more shall he receive.

February 12.

2 COR. viii. 21. *Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

Though I am not to be governed by man's opinion, it is my duty to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things, that is, to behave so holily and righteously before all men, that they may learn to admire and love the religion which gives me such good principles. I must not forget that men can judge only by what they see; and I must take care that all which they see in me is such as to make them judge me to be holy in heart and feeling. If my religion is good for anything, it will look well; my conduct will be just, honest, sober, quiet.

Lord, make me in Thy sight sincere,
From heartless prayer my soul protect,
And, when the eyes of men are near,
Make me more humbly circumspect;—
Seeming—as one who lives with Thee,
And being—what I seem to be.

February 13.

NUMB. xi. 5. *We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.*

Israel, when the Lord led thee in the wilderness, Himself going with thee, couldest thou long for the fleshly pleasures of Egypt, where thou wast a slave, and thy God far from thee? Alas! man is the same in all ages. How often have I complained of the heavy burden and yoke of the Cross, though my Saviour is with me to help me bear it, and have longed in my heart for the vanities, and pleasures, and gains, and honours of the world, which I have renounced. I have been almost ready to wish that I might lay down the Cross, and go back to the sins which (with shame I say it) I love still! God be merciful to me a sinner!

Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with Thine, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say
Thy will be done.

February 14.

NUMB. xiii. 30. *Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*

How often it is want of will, not of power to overcome temptation, that makes me give way to it! Satan whispers that he is too strong for me, but I know it is false. His strength is departed from him, if I will but be courageous, and, trusting in the strength of the Spirit, will fight manfully against my evil inclinations. I can control my tongue, and my temper, and my fleshly desires, and my love of gain, if I will not parley with them, but making the Lord my strength will determine to overcome. I am well able when I go with Him, trusting His promise.

From strength to strength go on,
Wrestle, and fight, and pray;
Tread all the powers of darkness down,
And win the well-fought day.

February 15.

PSALM cxli. 3. *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.*

It is very difficult, one of the hardest of tasks, to keep the tongue from evil: St. James says it is harder than to tame wild beasts. My Saviour set me the example when He stood before Pilate and "answered nothing." "There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak." But a great deal more mischief is done by not knowing the former than the latter. For one fault of not speaking, we might reckon a score of speaking wrongfully. I had better put a bridle upon my lips, and keep them closed too much, than open them carelessly. There are idle, useless, unprofitable words to be guarded against, as well as such as are positively harmful; and our Lord tells us, "By thy words thou shalt be condemned."

He who knew the thoughts of men,
He was gentle; let us then
Gentle be, in thought and tone,
We, who scarce can read our own.

February 16.

MARK xvi. 15. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*

This command was intended for me: what have I done to fulfil it? If I am sure that I cannot literally go to a foreign land and teach others, are there none at home that need teaching, and who are within my reach? Can I teach poor children in the Sunday School? or read the Bible to some sick or ignorant neighbour? Or can I persuade some one to go oftener to Church? Do I subscribe to a Missionary Society, and as much as I possibly can? If some one had not been sent by God to teach me, where should I have been? If I have "freely received" from Him, am not I bound "freely to give to others for His sake?"

Mid the homes of want and woe,
Strangers to the Living Word,
Let the Saviour's herald go,
Let the voice of hope be heard.

February 17.

1 TIM. vi. 9. *They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

What a fearful illustration of this truth is the history of Balaam! But Balaam's temptation is very common. He would have liked the gold and the honours which were offered him. Do I never find myself wishing for more than God has given me?—perhaps not much more, but just a little, just to save me from being pinched, or to give me something which I greatly desire. And if the opportunity is offered me of gaining more, am not I sometimes vexed if the means of obtaining it be not strictly according to God's will? Am not I tempted to think that it cannot be of so much consequence, to go contrary to His will, when the advantage is so great?

Fearful of wealth, and worldly pride,
Glad if a low degree,
With even sorrow by my side,
Help me to walk with Thee.

 February 18.

LUKE i. 79. *To guide our feet into the way of peace.*

True peace was that which Christ came to bring to all who will receive Him. My conscience has often tried to deceive me with false assurances of peace when there was no peace. But Jesus has bought my pardon, and points out to me the way of repentance and holiness of life, by which my soul may remain in peace. When all the ungodly are in fear, and misery, and discomfort, because of sin itself and of its consequences, I may have true peace which cannot be disturbed if I look to Him who is the Prince of Peace. It is His gift, not my merit, so I need not be afraid.

Touched with a feeling of thy woe,
 Since all except its sin I know,
 I listen to the feeblest voice,
 Bid the most sorrowful rejoice;
 Then come, thou weary and oppressed,
 Come near, and I will give you rest.

February 19.

GAL. ii. 20. *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

I may do the same; and if He will but Himself enable me, from henceforth I will. I do believe that Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do believe that I have not anything, and cannot have anything, but through Him and for His sake. I do believe that He is mine, and that through Him I have all I need. I do believe that in Holy Communion I do really receive Him into my very soul and body, and that having Him I need nothing besides, either bodily or spiritual. He can sustain my body if He pleases without food, and my soul by His continual grace.

Thus would I live; yet now
 Not I, but He,
 In all His power and love
 Henceforth alive in me.

February 20.

NUMB. xxxii. 23. *Be sure your sin will find you out.*

How have I thought to escape my sins, and tried to cheat myself respecting them? How often, through God's mercy, has my sin found me out already, and so saved me from going on in it till I was hopelessly lost! And yet am I not trying to cheat myself still?—playing with some sin, clinging to it in spite of everything, and often pretending to fancy that it is not sin at all? And when will it find me out? Shall I see it now and humbly confess it? or shall I hide it in this world, and let it find me out in the next, when it is *too late*?

In vain: the averted cheek in loneliest dell
Is conscious of a gaze it cannot bear,
The leaves that rustle near us seem to tell
Our heart's sad secret to the silent air.

February 21.

1 COR. xiii. 11. *When I became a man, I put away childish things.*

Have I really made advances in spiritual things answerable to the growth out of childhood to manhood? Have I really holier thoughts than I had? Do I long more for heaven? Do I think more of it? Do I care less for the things of this present life? Am I not so easily put out of temper? not so soon tired at prayer? Do I pray more earnestly, and for better things? Am I not so easily interrupted in my thoughts when engaged in devotion? Ought I not to be ashamed that I am after all but a very child in religion—a babe, not able to endure strong meat, and hardly even nourishing my soul with heavenly milk? The season of Lent is a good opportunity for me to examine myself respecting this, and also to set about with God's help, seeking to "grow in grace."

So thou, my soul! with careful step,
Follow my leading Lord;
The broken fragments gather up
Of every deed and word.

Ash-Wednesday.

HOSEA xiv. 1, 2. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.*

To "return," and to "turn," is to leave off walking in the way you have been walking, and to go the opposite way. So to return to God and to turn from sin, is to leave off our bad and careless ways, and to try to serve Him. Try to break off some bad temper, or habit, or speech during this Lent; and pray God humbly to be pleased with you for Jesus Christ's sake.

So come I to Thy mercy gate,
Where mercy doth abound,
Imploring pardon for my sin,
To heal my deadly wound.

First Thursday in Lent.

EZEK. xxxiii. 11. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*

Satan tries to make us think that God is severe, and "austere," and unkind, ready to take vengeance for every offence. But "God is love." If we will persist in evil He must punish eternally; but He yearns over every soul as a mother trembles for her son upon the wide ocean, and He longs to have us in His bosom, and desires to make every one of us really happy.

I thought His love would weaken,
As more and more He knew me;
But it burneth like a beacon,
And its light and heat go through me.
And I ever hear Him say,
As He goes along His way,
O silly souls, come near Me,
My sheep should never fear Me,
I am the Shepherd true.

February 24.

ISA. liii. 6. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

Every one to *his own way*: how true! Not God's way, nor his neighbour's way, but each his own, whatever at the time he fancied. And so missed the path; and then we all think we can get right again just when we please. But the *sin* of going astray, when we might have gone right—what of that? Oh, the love of the Father, the love of the Son! The Father laid on the Son, the Son took upon Him, like the scape-goat among the Jews, all our sins, all the sins of all of us, so that we may go free.

But Thou on the accursèd tree,
In mercy hast embracèd me;
For me the cruel nails, the spear,
The shame, the bitter scoff, did bear.

February 25.

ROM. vi. 23. *The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The devil is so just a master that he will not suffer one workman of his to go without his pay. He will not always shew himself openly as the master who employs; he can make himself appear very different. But he never excuses the sinner the receipt of his wages. Unless we are torn away from him by the power of Jesus Christ, only think of Satan's pay-day! Death! "Depart ye cursed," "This is the second death," "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Only try to imagine that as really belonging to *you*.

Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no languor shew,
This for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

February 26.

LUKE vii. 47, 48. *I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loveth much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.*

What must have been her peace and joy when she went away with these blessed words echoing in her ears! The same blessing is mine. Day by day does the Church assure me in His Name that He pardoneth and absolveth me if I repent and believe in Jesus Christ. He is the same as when He was on earth. The word spoken by His authority is the same as when it came from His own lips. I will go on my way rejoicing in His assurance, but trembling lest I should forfeit it by fresh sin.

Just as I am—Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe,—
O Lamb of God, I come.

February 27.

1 JOHN i. 8, 9. *If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

What folly it is in me either to try to deceive myself that my sins are not so great, or to be afraid to own them to my God. He knows them, knows all about them. To confess them to Him is not to tell Him anything which He did not know before. It is not that I have to persuade Him to forgive me. If it were, I might well hesitate; but He is already disposed and willing, and since He has punished my dear Saviour in my stead, He can be just as well as merciful when He forgives. Lord, I will not hide my faults.

Lord, when we bend before Thy throne,
And our confessions pour,
Teach us to feel the sins we own,
And shun what we deplore.

February 28.

ISA. lxiv. 6. *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf.*

Shall I be proud of my good deeds and satisfied with them? Let me look plainly at them, and see what they are worth. My acts of devotion, prayers, Church-services, fastings, communions,—can I say with truth that on any one occasion I have gone through any one of these without any distraction or wandering of thought? Or kindnesses done to other people,—can I really say that my motive has been simply and purely the love of God in Christ? no pride, no selfishness, no self-satisfaction, no hope of reward lurking secretly in my heart? Filthy rags indeed are my “holy things.” I must seek for a better garment to appear in before my God.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His Blood.

February 29.

JOSHUA vii. 12. *Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.*

God will make no peace with sin: neither may any of His people. Either God or sin, but not both. As long as we try to have just a little of that which God hates, and upon which He has placed His curse, so long God is turned away from us. We may do many good things, and forsake many other evil things, but so long as we cherish this one, we put an effectual barrier in the way of His coming to bless and sanctify us. What cursed thing am I cherishing, which is the real cause of all my coldness in religion?

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.

 March 1.

LUKE xii. 1. *Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*

Open, what we may call plain-spoken hypocrisy, is so very distasteful to men in general, that almost all persons disapprove it. But there are secret forms of hypocrisy which gain more favour. In these days, when religion is fashionable, and when attendance on outward forms is fashionable, when in some circles cant words and phrases are acceptable, and in others bodily gestures and dresses and public ceremonials, there may be much religion which is only outward show; and what is this but hypocrisy? Is our conduct in all the common concerns of life in keeping with our outward and public observances? If not, we have a mixture of the leaven of the Pharisees.

Oh, for a lowly, contrite heart,
 Believing, true, and clean,
 Which neither life nor death can part
 From Him Who dwells within.

March 2.

ROM. v. 19. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.*

Every Friday, and especially the Fridays in Lent, should make me think of the two things, my sin and my Saviour's sufferings. Christ came to undo the hurt which Adam did. Adam's one disobedience, Christ's one unbroken obedience! As I inherit the one, so, being made the brother of Christ and joint-heir with Him, I inherit the other likewise. I can never obey as He obeyed, never be righteous as He is. But for His sake God reckons His obedience and holiness to my account, and justifies me through Him. All praise to Him!

Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
 Which before the cross I spend,
 Life and health and peace possessing,
 From the sinner's dying Friend.

March 3.

PSALM li. 3, 4. *I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.*

David when he said this did not forget how grievously he had offended against Uriah and Bathsheba; but he felt so keenly the heinousness of his sin against God, that it almost eclipsed the offence against them. Do I feel my sins as committed against God? that His mercies I have despised, His warnings slighted, His will set at nought, His laws broken, His threatenings dared, His punishments deserved? This is the great aggravation of sin. Lord, make me feel it more and more, and have mercy upon me.

The circumstances of my crimes,
Their number and their kind,
Thou know'st them all; and more, much more
Than I can call to mind.

March 4.

ACTS iii. 19. *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*

Conversion is more often talked about, than really worked in the heart. It is the turning of the whole heart to God, so that we care only for what pleases Him: and it consists partly in leaving off all evil habits, and taking to all which is good. Am I really converted in heart, really changed, so that I hate the things which God hates, and keep clear from them at any cost, and follow after holy things with eagerness and earnestness? This is what I do truly desire.

O righteous Judge, in mercy deign
To grant us all we need,
We pray for time to turn again,
And grace to turn indeed.

 March 5.

DAN. ix. 14. *Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He doeth: for we obeyed not His voice.*

It is just and righteous of God to punish me for breaking His laws. I sometimes think it hard, and something tempts me to think Him severe and cruel. But is He not bound to defend His own commands and power? All kinds of evil are His instruments of punishment, and all are sent to bring us to our senses and to amendment of life. Whatever trial comes to me I will take it as God's chastisement, and will try to improve under it.

Sweet is the bitterest smart
That with the bended knee
Bows down this broken heart:
For who, my Saviour, who could be
A sufferer long, that flies to Thee?

March 6.

REV. iii. 19. *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

God's chastisements are proofs of His love to me. If He did not care for me He would not put me to pain. How can I neglect His chastening love, and not do that for which He sends the chastening? He chastens that I may learn the evil of my past and present ways, and may be brought to repent of them. I will try to return His love by endeavouring to profit by His punishments. O Lord, shew me the fresh mercy to make me to repent deeply and earnestly, not like Ahab and Israel only for a time and feignedly, but like David and St. Peter with all my heart and for ever.

The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown;
No traveller ever reached that blest abode,
Who found not thorns and briars in his road.

March 7.

PSALM ix. 17. *The wicked shall be turned into hell: and all the people that forget God.*

What awful words! but how plain and simple they are! How continually I have forgotten God—forgotten that He sees me, forgotten that He has some wish for me to do or not do a thing, that Him I ought to serve and obey, that His love ought to influence my conduct, that He will call me to account, that He will not be deceived. Do I ever really reflect on hell? and what it will be to be cast in there? How thoroughly I deserve it! But Christ died for me, and in Him, His precious Body and Blood, I will hope and trust.

Couldst thou know how great the sorrow,
Which, in hell that knows no morrow,
Can from hope no comfort borrow,
Thou thy chains hadst broken.

March 8.

AMOS iv. 11. *I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning.*

Why am I here to listen to God's warning voice calling me again to Him? Why have not I been cut off by sickness, or accident, or some sudden death, as I have seen so many? Why have not I been cut off in the midst of my sins without time to cry for mercy? Why am I thinking about repentance, and believing as much as I do believe in my dear Saviour? It is only God's goodness to me particularly. While He has suffered others to follow their own sins and to reap their fruits, He has snatched me out of the evil by His grace, and by His grace He has made me what I am, and by His grace He would make me better still if I would not hinder Him.

Engage this roving treacherous heart
To fix on Mary's better part,
To scorn the trifles of a day,
For joys that none can take away.

March 9.

1 JOHN iv. 10. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Who can answer the question, "Why did God love mankind?" We can go no further in reply than to say that He was pleased so to do. This is real love, when there is no such motive as generally kindles love in our breasts; as, for example, leads us to love God Himself,—gratitude, sense of benefits conferred or to be conferred, similarity of disposition or taste, and the like. I do love God: I am ashamed that I love Him so little; I heartily desire to love Him much more. But I could not have loved Him even this little, except that He first loved me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

March 10.

PROV. xxviii. 13. *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy.*

There are different ways of covering sins. Some persons do so by hypocrisy or open falsehood, pretending that they do not or have not done the sins; others by doing the sin in secret and shewing better conduct to the world. Again, we may cover them by trying to forget them, trying to make our own conscience excuse them, blinding our own eyes to them, or by not owning them as they really are in our prayers to God. None of these things will prosper. The truth will force itself out some day, perhaps at a very inconvenient season, and if not before, at the last day, when God will bring us to judgment.

When, rising from the bed of death,
O'erwhelmed with guilt and fear,
I see my Maker face to face—
Oh, how shall I appear?

March 11.

HEB. x. 16, 17. *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*

The two great Gospel gifts, the Holy Ghost to dwell in the heart to make me willing and able to keep God's law, and His free pardon for my former sins! Now I am without excuse if I offend. I cannot plead that I do not know, or that I cannot do, or that I am afraid. God gives me the knowledge, gives me the power, and is tender to forgive. Here is my great responsibility. O Lord, give me the will, make me glad to keep Thy commandments, make me to love Thee for Thy tenderness.

Lord, draw my best affections hence,
Above this world of sin and sense;
Cause them to soar beyond the skies,
And rest not, till to Thee they rise.

March 12.

HEB. x. 26, 27. *If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.*

Terrible truth! I have known the truth. What if I should sin wilfully? that is, deliberately and knowingly leave what is right and go on in bad ways. As long as I am afraid of sin, and am grieved when I commit it, and am striving earnestly to keep from it, I need not fear. But if I grow careless, and allow myself in things which I know are sinful, and do not repent humbly, and fly to the Blood of Jesus Christ, then I may begin to fear that I am in great danger of this terrible fall, and its most terrible punishment.

There is a death whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath:
Oh, what eternal terrors hang
Around "the second death!"

March 13.

EZEK. xxxiii. 31. *They sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words. but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.*

How readily do my lips utter the words of the Church Services—the Confession, the Prayers, the Thanksgiving! How readily I listen to the sermon Sunday after Sunday! How very little I oftentimes feel what I am saying, and how little do I try to practise what I hear! Those prayers, those sermons, will rise up in judgment against me and will condemn me. The holy sounds will haunt me in everlasting torment if I do not amend my ways.

Wake then, Christian, from thy slumber,
Evening doth its shadows bring;
Few the hours thy days may number—
Christian, life's an earnest thing.

March 14.

MICAH vii. 18. *Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage. He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.*

It is impossible to put a true value on the tender considerateness of God. He makes so great allowances for us, and His delight is to grant forgiveness and set us free. How can I be so foolish as not to cast myself into His open arms, and readily take up His blessed service? I have so many sins to be forgiven, and He is so ready to forgive and forget them all! O gracious Father, enable me to give myself up to Thee, and to rejoice in Thy goodness.

Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared,
Unworthy though I be,
For me a blood-bought free reward,
A golden harp for me.

March 15.

GAL. vi. 7. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

Oh, if I could be convinced of this truth, that what I do to-day is like sowing the grain, and therefore by-and-by I shall be sure to do things of the same kind, only worse, like reaping the corn when it is ripe. The present is the time for me to form such habits as I wish to have in future and at the last, and according to these habits God will reward me through eternity. Now is the time, "To-day, while it is called to-day."

The things which most mere trifles deem,—
A walk, a ride, a book, a dream,
A pain, a laugh, a tear,—
All come with their commission high
To mould man for eternity,
By growth in goodness here.

March 16.

ROM. v. 8. *God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

He did not wait till we were holy and might be supposed to deserve it; but while we were sinners, and because we were sinners, Christ died to take away our sins, that they might be *freely* pardoned. For faithful servants, loyal subjects, dutiful children, it would have been a great thing, and proved a great love; but for sinners, for me as a sinner, so ungodly that I was quite without hope, to give Himself for me to save me, and this of His own free love, this is past everything. Man cannot comprehend it.

Countless, unutterable woes,
The bloody sweat, death's pangs and throes,—
These Thou didst bear, all these for me,
A sinner, and estranged from Thee.

March 17.

ROM. vi. 19. *As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

My hands, my feet, my tongue, my eyes, my ears, how readily they have done Satan's bidding, anything that was wrong, just as if it were the best thing possible. And yet Satan did not give them to me, and has no right to them. I will with God's help really try henceforward to use them all only in God's service. They are His, and He gave them to me. He has a right to them, and I should love to employ them for Him.

Talk—it is easy : dreams are sloth,
Mere wishes idler still :
Thy heart and hand, God wants them both
To love and do His will.

March 18.

ROM. v. 10. *If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

This is almost to anticipate Easter Day. If God has made me His friend when I was an enemy, He most surely will save me now that I am His friend. If Christ's death won for me the first, His life most surely will bring me the other. In my baptism I died with Him, in Holy Communion He continually puts fresh life into me, and so ensures my being saved. "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

Now no more can death appal,
Now no more the grave enthal;
Thou hast opened Paradise,
And in Thee Thy saints shall rise.

March 19.

ISA. i. 6. *From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it ; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.*

What a description of my soul! Everything gone wrong! My thoughts, my wishes, my hopes, all so sinful or worldly; even my holiest things so mixed up with evil! If to the world I may appear to have a decent outside, what a sight does my inner man present to God! But God's mercy, grace, and love will not cast me utterly away, but for Christ's sake will pardon, and cleanse, and sanctify me. "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!"

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That Fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

March 20.

PSALM xix. 12. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.*

How often does Satan try to persuade me that my unknown, private faults are not nearly so bad as my neighbour's which come to be known! But in one way they are worse, for I am more likely to overlook them. Nothing will do for God but being clean in the inward parts. How much fault have I within that I could not bear to have known to my neighbours! And how much is there which I even do not know myself! But all is known to God, and all is hateful to Him. I will watch against even what is secret.

But oft, alas! too well I know,
My thoughts, my love, are fixed below:
In every lifeless prayer I find
The heart unmoved, the absent mind.

March 21.

MATT. XXV. 41. *Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

It is very necessary for me to be continually reminded of the "terrors of the Lord," for I am very apt to cheer myself up with the hope of good things, and so to think only of God's love as to forget His justice. What will be the feeling of those who hear this most terrible sentence addressed to themselves? What will be my feeling if I hear it? O Lord, most holy and most gracious, turn me, whatever it may cost me, and save me out of this fire of damnation for Thy mercy's sake in Jesus Christ!

Never yet the tongue hath spoken,
Sense of man hath found no token,
Ne'er on thought of man hath broken,
Those unnumbered pains
Which are in that word 'damnation.'

March 22.

ISA. i. 18. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

Can anything be more gracious than this invitation of God to me? Will He invite me to reason with Him, and shall I be so hardened in my rebellion that I will not listen to His offer of mercy? No one but Himself knows how deep is the stain of my sins, how obstinate I have been, how often I have undone my repentances, and how absolutely undeserving I am of His forgiveness. Gracious Lord, I heartily desire to lay down my sins under Thy feet, and to accept Thy goodness.

There is a fountain filled with Blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

March 23.

ISA. liii. 5. *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.*

It is a painful thing to be the cause of any trouble or pain to a friend. And I by my sins have caused all that bitter pain and disgrace to my best and dearest Friend. O how hateful is my sin, and how precious is the peace which He has purchased for me. My own back deserved the stripes which furrowed His sacred Back, and these stripes healed the wounds of my soul. What can I render to Him for His love, or how shew Him my hatred of my sins or my value of His sufferings?

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

March 24.

JER. iii. 4. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?*

God condescends to entreat me, as if it were a favour to Himself, to treat Him as a Father, because He knows it is the only thing to save me from being lost as a wanderer. My own fancies I have followed, my own ideas of pleasure and enjoyment I have indulged, and I richly deserve to be filled with my own devices. But He calls me again, and offers to guide me back to Himself and to guide me on in His way. I will let Him lead me, I will try to follow His leading, and to keep His commandments.

My God, my Father, while I stray
Far from my home in life's rough way,
O teach me from my heart to say
Thy will be done.

March 25.

LUKE i. 35. *Therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

As on this day my dear Saviour first entered His Virgin Mother's womb that He might save me. How great His condescension, to stoop so low as to be born of a woman, the betrothed of a poor carpenter, for my sake! If He had left me to perish, what would He have been the worse? How humble ought I to be, following His example! Instead of seeking high places, or honour, or men's flattery, I ought to be glad to take a low place and be despised, that I may be more like Him. How can I ever be like Him?

O Saviour, Thou this day didst take
A human body for my sake;
All that belongs to man, but sin,
Thou didst stoop down, to enter in.

March 26.

LUKE xv. 18. *I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy Son: make me as one of Thy hired servants.*

I have had enough of the follies of the world and the flesh, and I feel my poor soul perishing for want. God is my Father still. He will not refuse me if I cry to Him in earnest. But I cannot think of myself as in any way worthy to call Him my Father. But I fully believe that He will receive me, and will not turn me away to perish utterly. Lord, pity thy lost and dead child; find him a place under the feet of Thine elect, that he perish not.

Hark! through the courts of heaven
Voices of angels sound!
"He that was dead now lives again,
He that was lost is found."

March 27.

ISA. lv. 6. *Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near.*

Lent is passing away: its solemn services will soon be over. Now the Lord is near that I may find Him, but perhaps before long He may go out of reach, if I do not seek Him. How many opportunities I have lost, and though I should like to have them again, they have gone by and left me. I shall be sure to seek Him at the last day, but then it will be too late, if I have not sought Him before: then He will be far off, and will not suffer me to find Him.

If some poor wandering child of Thine
Have spurned, to-day, the voice divine,
Now, Lord, the gracious work begin;
Let him no more lie down in sin.

March 28.

PHIL. iii. 13, 14. *This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Oh, how I wish I could say this with the same truth as St. Paul! I do continually look back at the bright and pleasant things of the world; and I am very slow and dull in seeking after heaven. I often think I shall lose it at last. So I shall, if God's mercy do not take me, like Lot, by the hand, and force me on with greater eagerness. I take so much more pains to make sure of things here, my amusements, my gains, my living. And I might do so much more for my soul!

Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve,
And press with vigour on;
A heavenly race demands thy zeal,
And an immortal crown.

March 29.

2 COR. vii. 10. *Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

I may be sorry, like Judas, when I feel the consequences of my sin; and then, like him, I shall only despair, and go on to worse things, and become a son of perdition. Or I may, by God's grace, like St. Peter, be sorry for my sins as committed against Him and His love, and then He will lead me on to repentance, and I shall never be sorry that I was brought to repent. Am I sorry? And why am I sorry? Is it because I have grieved and offended God? or because I see that my sin brings me trouble?

Give me, Lord, a contrite heart,
A heart that always looks to Thee:
Meek Redeemer, now impart
Thine own humility.

March 30.

ROM. viii. 32. *He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

He has given me the greatest of all things, His only Son, to save me by His death; what can He grudge me? Surely there is nothing which He will not give me. I do wish for many things: for my evil tempers to be subdued, my coldness and dullness to be taken quite away; for patience, thankfulness, prayerfulness; for faith, hope, love; for the fruits of the Spirit to be seen in my life. I sometimes think it is too much to ask this of God, but that is wrong: He has done the greatest, He will do all the rest.

Did ever mourner plead with Thee,
And Thou refuse that mourner's plea?
Does not that word still fixed remain,
That none shall seek Thy face in vain?

March 31.

EZEK. xxxvi. 26. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh.*

This is what persons are often very fond of talking about, and in the Communion Service I constantly pray God to "incline my heart to keep His law." Am I sure that I should really like this? If He does not do it, I cannot possibly enjoy heaven; I could not enjoy it with a heart that is fond of sin and foolish pleasure, and that cares so little for God. But if I have a new heart, and a soft heart, I shall be always caring only for heavenly things, I shall feel every word that He says, and I shall bid good-bye to worldly vanities? Shall I really like that?

Oh, from the world's vile slavery,
Almighty Saviour, set me free;
And as my treasure is above,
Be there my thoughts, be there my love.

April 1.

GAL. iii. 1. *Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you.*

During this great and holy week we are to have this one thought always present, viz. Christ suffered and died for me. We should try and picture Him to our mind going through His several sufferings, and in our mind stand and kneel before His Cross where we see Him hanging. In this way I must try to stir up in my heart sorrow for sin, faith in His blood, thankfulness for His death, and love to my neighbours. His grace will, I doubt not, flow down on me from Himself.

Truly blessed is the station,
Low before His Cross to lie,
While we see divine compassion
Floating in His languid eye.

 April 2.

2 COR. vi. 14. *What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?*

Therefore Belial cast out Christ, after that He had cleansed His Father's temple of the unrighteousness with which it was polluted. Light and darkness contended all this week. At first darkness seemed to prevail, but at length it was dispelled. Out of my heart must be driven and uprooted all which offends my God and Saviour, otherwise He cannot dwell in me,—really uprooted, plucked up and thrown quite away.

So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.

April 3.

MARK xi. 21. *Behold, the fig-tree which Thou cursedst is withered away.*

Sudden and speedy judgment! A warning to me that I do not trifle with any word of God, either in His Book, or in my conscience. His heart was full of love to His people, and He smote the tree to warn and instruct them. What shall be their curse for rejecting Him? What will be mine if I despise Him and His so great salvation? This week let me spend in special humbling myself for my past unfruitfulness, and praying for mercy at the foot of the Cross.

Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask!
This is the total sum?
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit: .
Lord, let Thy mercy come!

April 4.

MATT. xxvi. 24. *It had been good for that man if he had not been born.*

Terrific sentence! And he was an Apostle, and had done miracles in Christ's Name. He was like Capernaum and the evil one, exalted unto heaven, and failed there, and was cast out hopelessly into hell. Judas chose evil in the midst of the choicest good. That was his curse. How much of the choicest good has fallen unto my lot, especially in frequent communions! And if in my heart I still choose evil and do despite to the Spirit of grace, my doom will be the same as that of Judas. Awful warning!

O Saviour! teach us how to take
Warnings from the offender;
And keep our souls, for Thy dear sake,
Still to Thee true and tender;
Lest, turning wilfully away,
We leave Thy table, to betray.

April 5.

LUKE xxii. 19. *This is My body, which is given for you :
this do in remembrance of Me.*

This most blessed Sacrament! I will try to come to it less unworthily, remembering my dear Saviour, His pains, His death, and His institution of this service. And I will also put God in remembrance of what Jesus has done for me, and what He has promised to me for Jesus' sake. As He ever puts His Father in mind in heaven, by shewing His hands and His side, so I will on earth in celebrating this Sacrament. Thus through His mercy shall I have closest communion with Him, and cannot fail to have my prayers answered.

Thy Body, broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be;
The cup of blessing I will take,
And thus remember Thee.

April 6.

GOOD FRIDAY.

PHIL. ii. 8. *He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.*

Oh, my sin, my sin, that brought my dear Lord so low, and exacted of Him such a sacrifice! To-day let me search my heart thoroughly, and with real earnestness of purpose put away some sin. I would think too of my fellow men and women for whom He died; I will go into my chamber and pray for them, not wasting my time, nor spending it in amusement, but on my knees, interceding, like Christ Himself, for myself and all mankind. Awful but blessed day! what were the world without thee?

Yes! Thy Blood is all my plea,
It was shed, and shed for me;
Therefore to Thy Cross I flee.

April 7.

ROM. vi. 4. *Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death.*

The last day of Lent, the day of my dear Saviour's repose from the malice of His enemies, sends me back to my Baptism. As He was laid in the sepulchre, the heavy dull stone shutting Him in from the world, so in my Baptism was I laid down as dead to all the world and its sins. I am to be dead to them, to have no more to do with them, than a corpse has, to renounce them all and live wholly above them. This is the ground of hope that I shall rise to a glorious immortality.

All is o'er, the pain, the sorrow,
Human taunts and Satan's spite;
Death shall be despoiled to-morrow
Of the prey he grasps to-night:
Yet once more, His own to save,
Christ must sleep within the grave.

April 8.

EASTER DAY.

1 PET. i. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Oh, glorious day! Earlier than man can tell, my dear, dear Saviour rose from the grave, triumphing over His and my enemies. He did conquer them. They could not hold Him fast. And this Saviour is mine, and I am His. So that now I have hope that I too shall rise again. Death will take me, but he cannot hold me, because Christ is with me and in me, and He will raise me up at the last day. Hallelujah! Oh, that I could praise my Lord with sweeter strains and a purer heart!

Then wake, glad heart, awake, awake!
And seek thy risen Lord;
Joy in His resurrection take,
And comfort in His Word.

April 9.

LUKE xxiv. 6. *He is not here, for He is risen.*

And I must not look about among earthly things for Him, but raise my thoughts towards heaven. Instead of thinking so much about money, and work, and pleasure, and pain, and sickness, and all things of this kind, I ought to be thinking of heaven, my God, my Saviour,—what will help to take me to Him, what will hinder me from Him. My Bible, my Church, my prayers, the Lord's day, and above all, Holy Communion, ought to be more in my thoughts and more precious to me than earthly things. "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken Thou me, O Lord, according unto Thy word."

We in the words of Truth reply,
(An angel brought them from the sky,)
Our crown, our treasure is not here,
'Tis stor'd above the highest sphere.

April 10.

EPH. v. 14. *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

When a soul is given up to the world and sin, how truly is it likened to a person dead or asleep. Christ has risen, and joined me to Himself, so I can rise up from the power of my sins, and walk in newness of life. All His grace is given to me according to my need, so that I have no excuse for continuing in any sin. I can overcome temptation just as truly as Jairus' daughter could walk about again and wait upon her parents after Jesus had taken her by the hand.

Easter triumph, Easter joy,
Sin alone can this destroy;
From sin's power do Thou set free
Souls new born, O Lord, in Thee.

April 11.

1 COR. xv. 51, 52. *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

I shall hear that trumpet. How shall I feel when I hear it? All the dead in every place will begin to move when it is heard; the bodies will come to life again, and the souls will again come into them. Every one of us will know what is going to happen,—the judgment. And there will be no more dying—alive for ever, either in heaven or hell. Do I think of this trumpet? It is a thing I am certain to hear, not perhaps, or probably, but certainly. Will it wake me up to life, or to death eternal in the pit?

The trumpet sounds: the graves restore
The dead, which they contained before:
Prepare, my soul, to meet Him.

April 12.

JOHN xi. 25. *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.*

How sweet these words sound, and how comforting as we hear them whilst we go slowly along the churchyard-path at a funeral. If I really believe in Jesus and rest myself in Him, though my heart cease to beat and my body turns to dust, I "shall not die, but live." The blessed saints are not dead. They are enjoying the rest of Paradise and the presence of Jesus there. And I shall have the same, if only I now live and at last fall asleep with all my hopes and cares resting on Him. Lord, increase my faith!

Rather my spirit would rejoice,
And wish and long to hear Thy voice;
Glad when it bids me earth resign,
Secure of heaven, if Thou art mine.

April 13.

1 THESS. iv. 14. *As we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.*

They are only sleeping, my dear friends over whose departure I wept so sadly, whose place I can never fill upon earth. But every one is known to Jesus, and their death was "right dear" to Him. Their hearts were His while they lived here, so when they died He took them, He keeps them, He will bring them back, He will take them to Himself for ever. If God takes another dear one from me, I will try to yield him up submissively and thankfully, and looking forward in hope to his and my joy in eternity.

His scattered treasures He will claim,
So dear, He knows them all by name;
When He makes up the precious store,
And counts His 'jewels' o'er and o'er,
Of all that were, on earth, His care,
Not one shall be found wanting there.

April 14.

1 COR. xv. 55. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

If Christ's resurrection has made it sure that I shall rise again, and rise to eternal life, why need I fear to die? By death I shall exchange a painful, sinful state for joy and holiness. The grave cannot hold me, so in Christ I am more than conqueror over it. Death cannot hurt me: it helps me to better things. But I must cleave close to Jesus Christ, and never be parted from Him. Frequent communion, with regular earnest preparation, will be my great help.

Lives again our glorious King—
Where, O death, is now thy sting?
Once He died our souls to save—
Where thy victory, O grave?

April 15.

JOHN xxi. 17. *Feed My sheep.*

Three times did my dear Saviour, the good Shepherd, give charge to the Apostle to feed His sheep and lambs. To-day's Gospel tells how He breathed on the Eleven their first gift. He sends me His spiritual food by His ministers. He feeds me through their hands. I will look at Him through them. When they speak, I will hear His voice; when they absolve, I will believe in His forgiveness; when they pray, I will trust in His intercession; when they administer Holy Communion, I will receive it as heavenly food from Him.

O bless the shepherd, bless the sheep,
That guide and guided both be one;
One in the faithful watch they keep
Until this hurrying life be done.

April 16.

JAMES v. 19, 20. *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him: let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

Do I often complain how bad my neighbours are, or the people I live with, or have to do with; or that some one particular person is a disgrace? Have I ever really tried to make them better, or to do this person spiritual good? If I think of their state, and what is before them, the danger of their souls, can I help trying to do something? If I should succeed, how shall I ever be able to bless God enough for making this use of me? Lord, give me grace to try, and give me success, if it please Thee!

Then will I tell to sinners round
What a dear Saviour I have found;
I'll point to Thy redeeming Blood,
And say, 'Behold the way to God.'

April 17.

2 SAM. vi. 11. *The ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.*

God honours and blesses them who honour Him. If any person will treasure in his heart the thought of God's love, or will love and meditate on His Word, God's blessing will be on him. If in my family I worship God, and if I teach them all, servants and children, to seek God first, and make all things give way to His will, He will make me prosper in the way that He sees best.

I'll teach my household, bond and free,
How blest it is to worship Thee.
Saviour, within my house abide,
Thy word within our hearts will hide.

April 18.

ACTS xv. 39. *The contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder the one from the other.*

It is not seemly nor right for the servants of the Lord to quarrel. But even their faults He turns into instruments of good. My duty is to give up, and not dispute. It is a sad thing for wicked people to be able to point at the disputes of the good, and ask if that shews the mind of Christ. I will try to live at peace with all Christians, even when I cannot approve of and agree with their religious opinions or practices.

'Tis a pleasant thing to see
Brethren in the Lord agree,
Children of a God of love
Live as they shall live above.

April 19.

1 PET. iii. 15. *Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you the reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

If you have really learned Christ, and are tasting His grace, leaning on His help, and experiencing His goodness and power, you will be able to tell to another person why you love and serve Him. You ought continually to try yourself and ask, "Why do I profess to serve God?" "Why do I hope to be saved?" This will make you try your own foundation, and prove to yourself whether you are really depending on Christ or not, whether your religion is real, or only on the outside.

Ask ye what great thing I know
That delights and stirs me so?
What the high reward I win?
Whose the Name I glory in?—
Jesus Christ, the crucified!

April 20.

2 SAM. xii. 7. *Thou art the man.*

It is so easy to see faults in other people, to fit the sermons which we hear and the books which we read to their case; but the really profitable thing is to have the arrow of the Lord shot straight into our own heart, and to be made to know ourselves. Whenever I see a fault in another, or hear of some evil he has spoken, or find myself blaming him, let me think I hear these words spoken to me, "Thou art the man," and let me look directly to see if I cannot find some sin of my own to repent of. My neighbour's fault will then be turned to my profit.

When Thy statutes I forsake,
When the covenant I break,
Jesus! then remember Thine:
Check my wanderings
By a look of love divine.

April 21.

ACTS xviii. 10. *I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.*

This is God's continual assurance, and may be the continual comfort of every one of His servants in their varied dangers. No school-companion, no fellow-servant or fellow-labourer, no employer or teacher, no parent or brother, no friend or enemy, no customer or partner in business, shall be able to harm thee if thou wilt go on in My strength, and none shall be able to turn thee aside from My path if thou wilt hold My hand and walk warily. Dangers and temptations there are manifold, but I will try to trust God's promise.

Though destruction walk around us,
Though the arrow past us fly,
Angel guards from Thee surround us:
We are safe, if Thou art nigh.

April 22.

PSALM xxxi. 21. *Oh, how plentiful is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; and that Thou hast prepared for them that put their trust in Thee, even before the sons of men.*

How strikingly this is illustrated in David's history when he fled from Absalom. God has an abundant store of His own tenderness and kindness laid up for His people, from which He draws according to their need on every occasion. The more we cast ourselves on Him in every position in which we find ourselves, the more we shall learn how inexhaustible is His kindness. He can give His servant peace of mind, so that he shall be undisturbed even when his enemies are most violent against him. There may be war without, but He gives peace within.

I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills lose their weight, and tears their bitterness:
Where is Death's sting? where, Grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

April 23.

PSALM cxii. 7. *He will not be afraid of any evil tidings; for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord.*

Have I such faith and trust in God that I am not over-set with fear of what is, or may be, coming? Do not I look forward sometimes, and dread some accident or sickness or disappointment? And have not I been quite beaten down by some unexpected bad news? Where is my faith? Does not God order all things—all things that concern me and mine, as well as the affairs of other people? Is not His word pledged that He will do all things well for me? Cannot I trust Him? Will He forget? or is His hand shortened that He cannot save me? I am ashamed of my unbelief.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take:
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

April 24.

2 PET. iii. 9. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

How I have wondered sometimes that God has borne so long with the wickedness of the world; and have been almost ready to doubt whether He be true and holy, else He would not suffer it as He does? My own ignorance is at fault. It is God's mercy to myself. He is delaying, that I and that others may have more time to turn to Him. He desires above all things that we shall be saved from perishing; so He postpones His punishment, and calls on me to repent. Oh, why, why should He care about me, whether I perish or not?

So in thine awful armoury, Lord,
The lightnings of Thy Judgment-day
Pause yet awhile, in mercy stor'd,
Till willing hearts wear quite away
Their earthly stains.

April 25.

JOHN xv. 5. *Without Me ye can do nothing.*

When shall I learn this? The Epistle reminds me of the dangers which beset me from false teachers of various kinds, teachers of untrue doctrine, and tempters to sin. Christ has joined me to Himself in my baptism, and as long as I cleave to Him and do not think to go by myself, He will preserve me. O my heavenly Father, purge me in any way that seemeth good to Thee, to make me bear more fruit, but do not cut me off from the Vine. In Holy Communion bind me closer and closer to Him, that I may not be separated even in thought, but may be wholly His and He wholly mine, for His sake.

If Thou, dear Saviour, still be nigh,
Cheerful I live and joyful die;
Secure, when mortal comforts flee,
To find ten thousand worlds in Thee.

April 26.

1 JOHN ii. 15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

When shall I leave off this love of the world which keeps the love of God out of my heart! I do wish to love Him alone, but this wretched world steps in and draws my heart to itself. I really hate the world while I love it, for drawing me to love it; and I long to love God, while yet I know I do not half love Him as I ought. I cannot bear that anything shall keep me from Him, and yet I do not tear myself from things of the world. O my dear Lord, of Thy great goodness draw me wholly unto Thyself!

Oh, from the world's vile slavery,
Almighty Saviour, set me free;
And as my treasure is above,
Be there my thoughts, be there my love.

April 27.

2 SAM. xxiv. 24. *Neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.*

What has not God done for me? What did it not cost Him to do it? His only Son, that Son's precious Blood! How can I help wishing to shew my feeling of His great goodness by doing something in return? At the best and most, it must be very poor and very little, not worth His acceptance; but to be worth my offering to Him it must, like the poor widow's two mites, cost me something: Kindness to a child or neighbour, bearing an injury, thinking well of an enemy; something at all events which I *feel*.

What! grudge my God who loved me so?
Give Him what costs me nought?
Never! to Him my all I owe;
I'd rather nothing bring, than shew
A thankless, niggard thought.

April 28.

1 KINGS iii. 9. *Give Thy servant an understanding heart.*

What a blessed choice to make, when he had leave to choose anything! God asks me every day to choose, and promises to give whatever I will ask of Him. What am I really choosing, and secretly, though perhaps not in actual words, begging Him to give me? Is it a little more money, a little more leisure, or honour, or freedom from pain, or more strength, or something else of this kind? Or is it His grace, that I may know Him, love Him, serve Him above all things?

Give me, [O Lord, an earnest heart,
Anxious to do Thy will,
Contented with whatever part
In life 'tis mine to fill.

April 29.

ACTS xvi. 28. *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

Almost, and not altogether? And why not? What is the hindrance? what is the treasure which I value so highly as to cherish it rather than God? Will this prove in the end a greater treasure? When the time of trial comes, and my last breath is dying out, and when I stand before the judgment throne, will this treasure help me, and help me more than God? Shall I value and rejoice in this thing then, this which now holds me back from making God my all in all?

Is there a thing beneath the sun
That strives with Thee my heart to share?
Ah, tear it thence and reign alone,
The Lord of every motion there!
Then shall my heart from earth be free,
When it hath found repose in Thee.

 April 30.

1 KINGS vi. 7. *There was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.*

To shew how quietly God works, unobserved by man. He is like the dew which steals upon the grass and no one can see it; like the gentle summer breeze, which just moves the leaves, but itself cannot be seen. His grace is like the seed growing in the ground out of sight and hearing; like the still small voice, which makes no loud sound. It is not by striking sermons, or startling books, or terrible accidents, or fits of religion that I am to be made holy, but by my quietly, in secret, in the depth of my heart, treasuring His grace, and doing every-day duties by His help.

The storm is o'er—and hark! a still small voice
Steals on the ear, to say, Jehovah's choice
Is ever with the soft, meek, tender soul:
By soft, meek, tender ways He loves to draw
The sinner, startled by His ways of awe.

May 1.

JOHN i. 45. *Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth.*

Do I, like this Apostle, talk to my intimate friends about God and my dear Saviour? God says that He specially listens to such private conversations, and keeps a book of remembrance for those who talk. How much talk I waste: how much nonsense I talk to my friends: how much precious time I waste in trifling and in saying the same thing over and over again! How much more good I should get myself, and do to others, if I were to talk of the good things which God has done for our soul, and this not for mere talk's sake, but with reverence and love.

The youthful convert, fain to prove
The blessings of his new-found love,
First seeks his own abode;
And the dear brother of his heart
Persuades, to choose the better part,
And give himself to God.

May 2.

ACTS XXVIII. 15. *He thanked God, and took courage.*

Satan delights in making us fearful and out of heart. But if we will lift up the heart to God in prayer, and then look round at His mercies, we shall also see enough to cheer us. It is wrong to be downhearted; it is a duty to be cheerful and hopeful. God is true, and He will make all things work out well. So take courage, and trusting in Him go forward cheerily and boldly, not afraid of enemies, nor doubtful of success. Your temper, your tongue, your bad feeling, may be very obstinate, but have courage, and fight against it, and you shall conquer.

Let your drooping hearts be glad;
March in heavenly armour clad :
Fight, nor think the battle long—
Soon shall victory tune your song.

May 3.

MATT. xii. 42. *The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*

What excuse can I make for not thinking of my Saviour more, and caring more for Him? I grudge a little sleep, a little trouble, a little loss, to go to church, to study my Bible, to prepare for the Communion. And the Queen of Sheba grudged nothing merely to see and hear Solomon. Was Solomon greater and wiser than my Saviour? Is not Jesus worth as much pains as Solomon?

We cannot hope the heathen's doom,
To whom God's Son is given;
Whose eyes have seen beyond the tomb,
Who have the keys of heaven.

May 4.

ROM. iii. 24. *Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

What could I give to God to obtain His favour and pardon? But He requires nothing. He justifies me freely, of His own goodness counts me as if I had not sinned, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. He makes me holy, but it is not for this cause that He counts me holy, but for my Saviour's sake. He is my righteousness, so that being joined to Him, I am righteous in God's sight.

Though sin would fill me with distress,
The throne of grace I dare address,
For Jesus is my Righteousness.
Against me earth and hell combine;
But on my side is power Divine:
Jesus is all, and He is mine.

May 5.

MATT. iii. 8. *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.*

Like a tree or plant, I am to be known by the fruits I bear,—what I do and say. Fruits of repentance are fresh deeds and words, quite contrary to the evil ones to which I have been accustomed,—things which shew that I am sorry for my past conduct. Such are acts of kindness, gentle speaking, taking trouble for others, acts of self-denial in meat and drink, almsgiving, acts of worship in public and private; and these carried on perseveringly, not just taken up for a time and then given up again. When I can see this in myself I may hope that I am really repenting.

Didst Thou for forty days and nights,
All food and rest refuse?
How boastful then the soul that slights
What Thou didst deign to use:
When Thou didst so Thyself prepare,
Need we no fastings and no prayer?

May 6.

MATT. v. 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.*

Our Lord's first words of blessing are for those who are humble in their own eyes, who see their own faults and shortcomings, and despise themselves in consequence. How much have I to unlearn before I attain to this! My wisdom, judgment, cleverness, humility, religion, on which I pride myself, and for which I think myself better than a good many persons,—I must learn how poor and unworthy all these things are, and think of myself as God thinks of me. Then He will exalt me in due time.

He comes, the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure,
And with the riches of His grace
To bless the humble poor.

May 7.

MATT. v. 4. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

And yet every one wishes his neighbour "a happy return," or "a happy life;" joy, freedom from care and pain, and so forth, seems the thing most desirable. It is the contrast between the world and God, as exemplified in the rich man and Lazarus. Do I mourn? or do I live a cheerful, merry life? I need not look grave and dull, and seem melancholy; but if I am not heavy-hearted because of my sin, and if I have no affliction to correct and purify me, I cannot have the least hope of that comfort which cannot be taken away.

Come, mourner—thus it seems to say—
Come forth from darkness into day;
Though lone thine heart and full thine eye,
Though sad sin's smart, and sorrow's sigh,
Yet come! if weary and oppressed,
Come near, and I will give you rest.

May 8.

MATT. v. 5. *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

The world tells me to stand up for my rights, and not allow myself to be trampled upon; it calls me "coward" if I give way instead of fighting. But Jesus "paid the things He never took," did not render "railing for railing," and bids me be meek like Himself. It is a very hard thing to consent to be falsely accused, or despised, or to lose what is my own, or what I have a right to. But I am far more likely to be justified if I leave my cause with God, than if against His will and His Spirit I fight for my own. He can best defend the cause of His people.

Give me that gentle spirit, Lord,
Which marks Thy faithful few,
Which answers not the railing word,
Nor does as worldlings do.

May 9.

MATT. v. 6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

When I read how the Psalmist longed for God, to know Him, to feel His presence, to be filled with His love, I can only be ashamed of myself, and pray God to give me grace to desire Him. I am not worthy to have this hunger, and yet I cannot be filled with God unless I do desire Him. From God Himself must come the desire and longing for Him. But I pray Him at any cost to give it to me; to take from me anything and everything, if only He will make me "pant after" Him, and be satisfied with nothing but Himself.

Thou know'st I love Thee, dearest Lord,
But oh, I long to soar,
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,
And learn to love Thee more.

May 10.

MATT. v. 7. *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

When I think what I shall need in the day of the great account, and how every hour in this life I am dependent altogether on God's mercy, not to visit my sins, or mark what I do amiss, how can I be hard upon other persons? It is so just a thing, and so good of Him to treat me as I treat my neighbour that I can only praise Him for it. But then I will try to do to my neighbour what I wish my God to do to me. If God delighteth in mercy, so will I, and not expect too much of persons, or be too hard on them when they do wrong.

Our souls provoked by lesser ills, to such
Should yield the pardon we require so much;
Forbearing others every hour we live,
Seeking forgiveness, called on to forgive.

May 11.

MATT. v. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

How far are even good people from attaining to this blessing! What wonder then that I find so much impurity of all kinds in my heart, mixed motives, a low standard of principle, unclean imaginations, hypocrisy. If I cannot have that great good, the greatest of all goods, which I so long for, and which I desire to long for much more eagerly, even to see God, without purity of heart, what will become of me? Gracious Saviour for Thine own sake, Who art purity itself, pity me, pardon and cleanse me.

Bless'd are the pure in heart,
For they shall see our God,
The secret of the Lord is theirs,
Their soul is Christ's abode.

May 12.

MATT. v. 9. *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

Have I never by foolish prattling, or by provocation, or to gratify my own pride or selfishness, stirred up strife between neighbours? And have I not sometimes shrunk from the trouble or risk of trying to put an end to a quarrel, and persuading men to be of one mind? This last is a blessed work; it is God's work, who "maketh men to be of one mind in an house," and is the Prince of Peace. Oh, let me be most cautious over all my words in the presence of others, and let me try, when neighbours are at variance, to set them at one again. It must be very carefully attempted, and not without seeking God's special help.

Oh, then the glory and the bliss,
When all that pained or seemed amiss,
Shall melt with earth and sin away;
When saints beneath their Saviour's eye,
Filled with each other's company,
Shall spend in love th' eternal day.

May 13.

MATT. v. 10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.*

It is a blessed privilege to be allowed to suffer for my Saviour, Who suffered so much for me. But I do not always feel it thus. I have very often neglected my duty, or changed my course, or concealed my religion, for fear of what persons would say of me or do to me. I have deserted my dear Captain, and have forfeited this great blessing. But I will in future, if He will help me, try to do better. I will, before companions, fellow work-people, customers, neighbours, and all I have to do with, speak up for Him, and live to Him, and will try not to be afraid.

Through tribulation's fire they came,
Beneath the Cross they met the flame;
And now from all their labours rest,
In Christ's eternal kingdom blest.

May 14.

2 KINGS x. 16. *Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.*

Was Jehu's zeal really "for the Lord" or for himself? Did he really care about the worship and service of God? or did he only destroy Ahab's family and the Baal-worshippers because that seemed the course by which he was to ascend the throne? Do I perform religious acts, such as coming to Church, teaching in school, receiving Holy Communion, supporting Missionary Societies from real love of God, or only because they are the proper things for a religious person to do, and because they are likely, as I fancy, to make God better pleased with me? Alas, how poor and deficient my best motives are.

Lord, make me in Thy sight sincere,
From heartless prayer my soul protect;
And when the eyes of men are near,
Make me more humbly circumspect,
Seeming as one who lives with Thee,
And being what I seem to be.

May 15.

ROM. xiv. 23. *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

That is, whatever a person does, thinking it is wrong and which he cannot honestly believe to be according to God's mind, is sin. How often have I tried to persuade myself that I might do and ought to do this and that, which if it had been any other person's case I should have said was wrong. It is very bad thus to trifle with conscience, to parley with it, try to talk it over, and persuade it to allow that which is wrong. But sin is sin, whatever we may fancy; and if we will do it against the warning of conscience it is doubly sin. What need have I of God's sovereign mercy.

Oh, that my heart was right with Thee,
And loved Thee with a perfect love;
Oh! that my Lord would dwell in me,
And never from His seat remove.
Jesus, apply thy pardoning Blood,
And make this bosom fit for God.

May 16.

MATT. xiv. 28, 29. *Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.*

When difficulties and dangers greater than usual come across my path, have I faith to meet them without fear in the strength of Christ? When some more arduous duty arises for me to undertake, have I faith to attempt it in Christ's strength? When I have tried, have I not found that I was able to do what was appointed for me as long as I was not afraid, but felt confidence in His help? When I trusted myself, or was frightened at the dangers, I failed. Lord, give me faith.

God of my life to Thee I call,
Afflicted at Thy feet I fall;
When the great waterfloods prevail,
Leave not my trembling heart to fail.

May 17.**ASCENSION DAY.**

LUKE xxiv. 51. *And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*

His labours on earth were ended; His sufferings come to an end; what had been foretold of Him fulfilled; His work accomplished; and He enters into His glory and reward. But He went not up until He had drained the last drop from the cup of woe, nor until the whole of His Father's will had been perfectly performed. He had earned His crown; but He goes to receive it for my sake. As He rests at the right hand of the Father He pleads for me, and sends gifts to me, and prepares for me a place that I may be with Him for ever. Alleluia. Praise the King of Glory.

See, He lifts His hands above;
See, He shews the prints of love;
Hark, His gracious lips bestow
Blessings on His Church below:
Still for us He intercedes,
His prevailing death He pleads;
Next Himself prepares our place
Saviour of the human race.

May 18.

ROM. viii. 34. *Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us.*

If I am a true living member of Christ, Satan's attempts to procure my condemnation are vain. In vain does Satan plead and struggle against Him. He has vanquished Satan, and carried the tokens of His victory into heaven. There He exhibits for ever to His Father His hands, His feet, His pierced side, to put Him in remembrance of His own work for me, and His Father's promises to Him because of that work. I beseech Thee, loving Jesus, cease not to pray for me, and present my poor prayers to Thy Father. Without Thee I cannot reach Him.

He comes not for vengeance pleading,
But for mercy interceding;
And by His own grief and loss,
Plads His prayer upon the Cross.

May 19.

COL. iii. 1, 2. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

When He was on earth, everything which came before Him was connected with some heavenly thought. I wish it could be the same with me, that all earthly things with which I come in contact might suggest to me holy thoughts; and that while I am constrained to live amongst earthly things, and to be occupied with them, I might be really in thought engaged with things of heaven. Oh, that I could give all earthly matters a spiritual turn.

Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone,
He Whom I fix my hopes upon;
His path I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way till Him I view.

May 20.

JOHN xvi. 7. *It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you.*

He has gone, and has sent the Comforter. He now often seems to depart from His servants, that they may feel the want of Him, and when they look for Him and search with all their heart He sends the Comforter again. Have I known what it is to forget Christ, thinking perhaps of myself, or of the world, or some pleasure, and then when after a time I look again for Him He seems out of reach? But if I humble myself and own and hate my fault, He will again send His Spirit to lift me up and bind up my wounds.

And Thou didst promise Thou wouldst come again,
Nor leave us "comfortless" on earth to mourn;
And Thou didst go to get good gifts for men,—
Best gift of heaven! O Saviour Christ, return!

May 21.

MATT. xix. 30. *Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*

I have great religious advantages, much greater than many other persons. This will not save me. Many of these persons perhaps will use what little they have better than I use what God has given me, and then they will get before me. The Jews will be much behind many good heathens at the last day, and will be cast out all the more because they were so near to the True Life, and yet chose death. And it will be the same with me, if I do not use diligently and carefully all the opportunities which God vouchsafes to me.

Oh, gaze not idly on their fall,
But sinner, warnèd be:
Who spared not His chosen seed,
May send His wrath on thee.

May 22.

1 COR. v. 6. *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*

A little sin allowed will soon spread itself and do mischief to the whole soul. I have had painful experience of that. I thought it was so little a thing it could not matter, I should never think of it again, it would soon pass away. And I have found that by degrees I did it more and more, and did greater and worse things of the kind, and became more used to them, and thought less of them. One diseased animal will infect a whole flock; and one fault cherished in my heart has corrupted my whole soul. Lord, save me while there is time.

'Twas but one little drop of sin
We saw this morning enter in,
And lo! at eventide the world is drown'd.

May 23.

EZRA v. 6. *The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease.*

Be not fainthearted because you meet with opposition. Look up to God, and if He seems to hinder you, submit, and be fully assured that He will give relief in His own good time. Very likely if you pray to Him He will turn away even the present opposition, and the enemy shall not be able to hinder the good work. Remember the work is God's, not yours. He can hold back men's hearts and hand, and He can turn them whichever way He thinks fit. He will direct them best for you.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

May 24.

MATT. xxii. 12. *And He saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.*

Shall I dare to think of appearing before God at the last day in any other dress than that which He requires? This is Christ Himself. He is the garment of salvation. Am I really depending on Him? or am I thinking to be accepted and saved because I am better than others, and better than I used to be, or because there is no reason why I should not? Jesus is the only hope—His precious Blood, His prevailing merits. If I depend on any other thing, I shall not have a word to say in my own defence.

All my trust on Thee is stayed;
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.

May 25.

1 COR. viii. 13. *If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

If anything belonging to me does my neighbour harm, particularly if he sees me do a thing which he thinks wrong, and he by my example is encouraged to do it himself, though he thinks it wrong, I ought to part with it or leave it off, though it may be of itself quite lawful for me. I must take care of my neighbour's welfare. He is my brother, and God expects me to do what I can for my brother. Every sacrifice which I make for my fellow-Christian He counts as made for Himself.

Jesus deigns to call us "brother,"
And we should never grudge the care
Whereby we may assist another,
Or save him from the tempter's snare.

May 26.

NEHEMIAH ii. 4. *Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.*

How blessed a privilege it is to be allowed to lift up my heart to God, for guidance, strength, wisdom, grace, on every emergency. When the difficulty or doubt or danger arises, my first thought and instinct should be to pray to God, Who hears in secret. This is the way to "pray without ceasing." How many falls I should have escaped, how many mistakes I should have avoided, how many hurts I should have been spared, if like Nehemiah, I had remembered my God ever present, and poured out my want into His ear. Lord, teach me to pray.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

May 27.**WHITSUNDAY.**

ACTS ii. 4. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

This is the great gift so long promised and foretold, which Christ purchased with His Blood, and ascended that He might send down. It will not teach me foreign languages, but It is given to dwell in my heart, and It ought to influence my tongue, bridling it from speaking evil, bad words, violent words, unclean words, idle words, false words; and teaching me to "bless God even the Father," and to do good to man, my brother. This is part of what the Spirit is intended to do for me.

Come, gracious Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
With light and comfort from above;
Be Thou our Guardian, Thou our Guide,
O'er every thought and step preside.

May 28.

EPH. v. 30. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

This blessed Spirit has been given to me. He is "grieved" when I fight against Him, when He struggles with my conscience and I struggle against Him, when I do the things which He condemns, when I turn back into sins which I have renounced, when I disgrace my Christian name, and break my baptismal promise. If I persist in grieving Him, He will at last leave me and never return. To avoid this I must go now as He leads me by my conscience.

But chiefest, in our cleansèd breast
Bid Thine eternal Spirit rest,
And make our secret soul to be
A temple pure, and worthy Thee.

May 29.

ACTS viii. 17. *Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

This was Confirmation. Do I remember my Confirmation? what God did for me then when I stood forth and said "I do" promise to serve God? Have I kept that promise, and continually looked to God to continue to me the gift of the Holy Ghost? He will always give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him; but He will not force It on any one. I can do right by His grace strengthening me, so that I am without excuse. I am afraid that I often will not, because I like other things better.

Holy Spirit! morn and even,
Still and soft as gentle rain,
Drop into our souls from heaven,
And their languid life renew.

May 30.

ACTS xx. 28. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.*

We are God's flock. He cares for us, and has bought us for Himself at so costly a price. He has appointed shepherds over us, even bishops and priests. These, then, we are to receive as coming direct from Him, bringing His gifts, publishing His message, providing to every one exactly what he wants. God gives His gifts, distributes His food, sends His invitations and warnings by their means. For His sake I will love, honour, and obey them.

In mercy, Father, now give heed,
And pour Thy quickening Spirit's breath
On those whom Thou hast called to feed
Thy flock redeemed by Jesu's death.

May 31.

ESTHER iv. 14. *Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*

God raises up His own instruments as He requires them. As Esther was made queen that she might be able to interfere and save the Jews, so God has a purpose for me in placing me where I am, and with the people that I am called on to associate with. When He suggests to me something to be done, something to be said, something to be attempted, I must not hang back from it because of its difficulties and risks, but think that perhaps that is the principal thing which He wishes me to do, and I must attempt it in his strength.

Not ours, not ours the choice,
In great things or in small;
Be Thou our guide, our strength,
Our wisdom and our all.

Sunday.

PSALM cxxii. 1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.*

I cannot deny that very often I have been glad of an excuse for not going to Church; and often again have I been tired before service was over, and have not really tried to go along in my heart with it. But notwithstanding I do love the Lord's Day, and my better self does wish to love Church and the blessed services more. If God will help me I will pay more attention, pray the prayers, praise Him in the singing, and try to apply the sermon to myself. I will begin to go oftener to Holy Communion.

And dear to me the wingèd hour
Spent in Thy hallowed courts, O Lord;
To feel devotion's soothing power,
And catch the manna of Thy Word.

Monday.

1 PET. v. 7. *Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.*

God in very truth takes the deepest interest in everything which concerns me. And He is my Father. Will a father neglect his child's interests? Will God neglect mine? And shall I be able to manage them better than He? *All* my cares, He says, everything for my body, for my children, my work, my pleasure, and even everything for my soul. I will try not to fret about anything, but leave Him to provide for all.

Lord, let me cast all thought of care
For worldly things on Thee,
Thankful that Thou such weight wilt bear
For one who has small time to spare
For aught but holy strife and prayer
Thine evermore to be.

Tuesday.

ISAIAH lvii. 20, 21. *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

If I am not tossed about unceasingly with sin and temptation, all praise be to God for what He has done for me. The credit is not mine. How unspeakably miserable to have no peace! I feel in myself how true these words are, for my peace is often disturbed by my own tempers, and jealousies, and selfishness, and other things which come between me and God. Lord, crush them all, and dwell Thou alone in me.

Till Thou bid its passions cease,
Lord it never can have peace;
Cannot change its wicked will,
Till Thou whisper "Peace, be still."

Wednesday.

MATT. vi. 6. *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

Why do I know so little of the sweetness, blessedness, and power of prayer? Because I do not practise it as God invites me to do. He bids me tell Him every want, and ask for everything which I think that I want; and that boldly, believing in His love and goodness. To pray is a very simple thing, for it is just asking for what I want; to pray is a very great thing, for it is to rise up and speak to God Almighty. Lord, I beseech Thee, teach me how to pray.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.

Thursday.

HEB. x. 21, 22. *And having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.*

In Holy Communion we do on earth in a figure with the outward signs of bread and wine what our High Priest is always doing for us in heaven. He presents His crucified Body in our behalf to His Father, and we do the same in this Sacrament. I will come, therefore, according to His invitation, in full assurance that He is verily present, and that He verily and indeed comes into my heart and takes away my sins. I desire to believe and doubt not.

Therefore we before Him bending,
This great Sacrament revere;
Faith our outward sense befriending,
Makes our inward vision clear.

Friday.

LUKE xiv. 33. *Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.*

This is only reasonable, because Jesus forsook all that He had in heaven for us. I must take leave of all that I care for most, and be quite ready to part with it if He chooses to remove it—wife, husband, goods, children, parents, brothers and sisters, comforts, home, country, ease, society, everything. And this I wish to do. Without Him what use are they to me? And if I have Him, I can do without these. O that I may have grace to cling to Him more and more.

No; rather let me freely yield
What most I prize, to Thee;
Who never hast a good withheld
Or wilt withhold from me.

Saturday.

PSALM xxiii. 4. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.*

What an awful moment when the soul leaves this body and passes into the unseen and unknown world! when all the time of preparation is over, and it is heaven or hell for ever! How unspeakable the blessedness, then, of knowing and trusting God, lying on my Saviour's breast, assured that He will keep and carry me and land me safe. And this He will most certainly do. He will not leave me at the last and greatest necessity. But if I am to have this good hope, then, I must know Him, and believe in Him, and trust Him, and serve Him in my life.

And oh! when I have safely passed
Through every conflict but the last,
Still, still unchanging, watch beside
My dying bed, for Thou hast died;
Then point to realms of cloudless day,
And wipe the latest tear away.

